

Title: **PREVENIENT GRACE**
Text: Psalm 21:3
Subject: *The Grace that Precedes Grace*
Introduction:

Turn with me to Psalm 21. The title of my message tonight is **PREVENIENT GRACE**. We do not often hear that term in our day, but there was a time when preachers talked about it and wrote about it regularly. The word “prevenient” means, “preceding, or coming before.”

Proposition: Prevenient grace is that grace that precedes and prepares the way for God’s saving grace.

The Scriptures give us much instruction about this prevenient grace and numerous illustrations of it. Let’s begin here, in Psalm 21. This Psalm is all about our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Psalm 20 is a prayer for his success in the accomplishment of redemption.
- Psalm 21 is a joyful song of praise, assuring us of his success and the glory that would be his when he had redeemed us with his precious blood.
- Psalm 22 reveals our blessed Lord’s suffering, his agony of body, heart and soul as he hung upon the cursed tree, bearing our sins under the wrath of God.
- Psalm 23 declares the blessed security of our souls under the watchful, tender care of Christ, our Good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep.
- Psalm 24 declares his ascension and glory as our King, the reward of his obedience unto death, because he obtained eternal redemption for us.

Look at the opening verses of Psalm 21. — **“The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!”** (v. 1). — Here is a prophecy of our Savior’s joy as the result of the salvation

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which he would accomplish. When God the Son had assumed our nature, as agreed upon in the covenant of grace, having accomplished our salvation by the strength of Jehovah, having entered in once into the holy place with his own blood and obtaining eternal redemption for us, “*how greatly did he rejoice!*” What bliss, what joy, what rejoicing there is in Immanuel’s heart as he sits yonder upon his throne. His work is finished. His Father is glorified. His people are redeemed. Their salvation is certain.

“Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah” (v. 2). — What was our Savior’s heart’s desire? “*Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!*” “*Father, glorify thy name.*” “*Thy will be done.*” It has been given to him. What was the request of his lips? Was it not the salvation of his people? The heart desire of Christ and the prayer of his lips, which cannot be and shall not be withheld from him, was the glory of his Father and the eternal welfare of his people. Nothing is so dear to the heart of the Son of God as our...

- Redemption By His Blood.
- Regeneration By His Spirit.
- Comfort In Trouble.
- Preservation In Trial.
- Holiness Before His Father.
- Happiness Forever In His Presence!

“Selah!” — These are things before which we should pause in thoughtful adoration. Stop here. Linger awhile. Meditate on these things. Eternity will be too short for us to comprehend them fully!

“For thou preventest (goest before) **him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head”** (v. 3). — I’ll come back to this in a minute.

“He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever” (v. 4). — This refers to our Lord’s resurrection, exaltation and dominion, which he earned, asked, for, and received from his Father.

(Psalms 16:8-11) “I have set the LORD always before me: because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved. (9) Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. (10) For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. (11) Thou wilt show me the path of life:

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in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.”

(John 17:1-2) “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: (2) As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”

“His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him” (v. 5). — Christ’s glory is great in Jehovah’s salvation. We are Trinitarians. We worship, love and serve the one true and living God in the trinity of his sacred persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We delight in the Father’s election, the Son’s redemption and the Spirit’s regeneration. However, the triune God has purposed that Christ, the Mediator, God the Son, shall have all pre-eminence in the whole affair of salvation, putting all fulness in the Son, for the glory of the Son. — *“The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand”* (John 3:35).

- All the fulness of the Godhead is in Christ the Son (Col. 2:9-10).
- All the fulness of salvation and grace is in the Son (1 Cor. 1:30-31).
- All the fulness of glory is in the Son (John 1:14).

How I love to meditate upon, read about, hear about, sing about and preach about the glory of Christ! I am like a dying saint I read years ago. Someone in the old lady’s room began to speak about the greatness, grace and glory of Christ. Others urged him to be quiet and let the woman rest. As they did, she said, “Oh, speak some more! Let me hear more. Do not stop telling his praise. I long to see him soon; but I want to hear about him now!”

“Surely I cannot say too much of Jesus Christ. On this blessed subject no man can hyperbolize. Had I the tongues of men and angels, I could never fully set forth Christ...Oh, the loveliness, beauty and glory of his countenance! Can I speak, or you hear too much of such a Christ?” *Isaac Ambrose*

The tongues of men and angels combined, the tongues of all men and all angels combined, could never tell out the glory of our all glorious Christ. Let me therefore never look for another theme. May God give me grace to give my life to its dying breath to preach the great glory of Christ in the

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salvation of sinners. Christ's glory is great in Jehovah's salvation! — *"Honor and majesty hast thou laid upon him!"*

"For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance" (v. 6). — Having finished his work on earth the Lord Jesus Christ ascended up into heaven. There he was received by his Father with a cheerful countenance, being well pleased with his obedience, righteousness, and sacrifice. He sat down with his Father on his throne in our nature. Being now in the presence of God, which is fulness of joy, at his right hand, where are pleasures for evermore, the Man Christ Jesus, God in human flesh, is filled with exceeding joy, made glad by his Father's countenance of approval, pleasure and delight!

Now, go back to verse 3. — **"For thou preventest (goest before) him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head"** (v. 3). — The word "prevent" means to "precede" or "go before." So the meaning of this verse is that the Lord God bestowed all the bountiful blessings of goodness and grace upon us in Christ even before Christ came. Indeed, he blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ before the world began (Eph. 1:3). Still, there is more. God's goodness toward his elect goes out to them even before Christ comes to them in the secret workings of providence. This text has reference to that great, wondrous mystery of prevenient grace, grace which goes before and prepares the way for God's saving grace.

Goodness and mercy precede Christ's coming, come with Christ, and follow Christ. Then exaltation and glory are given to him. The Lord God, the triune Jehovah has set upon his head a crown of pure gold, a pure, everlasting, precious, indescribably glorious crown.

- As The Reward of His Obedience.
- In The Hearts of His People.

Let me show you a few places in the Book of God that declare and describe God's great, wondrous prevenient grace.

PRESERVING GRACE

In the opening verse of Jude, it is declared as that grace by which we are preserved in Jesus Christ.

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(Jude 1:1) “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and called.*”

Here God the Holy Spirit tells us that all who are God’s, because we are from eternity “*sanctified by God the Father,*” are “*preserved in Jesus Christ.*”

The word “*preserved*” means “watched over,” “guarded,” “kept from loss or injury.” It is a passive verb. So the sweet message of God to our hearts in these words is this. — **Because God has set us apart unto himself in Christ in eternal election, we are absolutely kept from any harm coming to us, because we are in Christ made the objects of his unceasing care.**

Indeed, the words here might be translated, “kept for Jesus Christ.” The Lord our God keeps his eye upon us all the time. He watches over, guards and protects us continually. And this preservation is altogether his work. We are not preserved in Christ because we persevere in faith. We persevere in faith because we are preserved in Christ.

Let all who trust Christ understand and ever rejoice in this blessed fact. In eternal sanctification, we were set apart by God the Father in election in Christ, chosen in him. We have a place in his heart, who declares, “*I have loved thee with an everlasting love.*” We are from everlasting in his heart, in his hands, and in him. We are one with Christ! We are one with him as members of the body are one with the head. We are one with him as our covenant Surety and Representative before God. Being in him and one with him, we are preserved in him and by him — preserved by him before we were called and preserved by him after we have been called. It is written, “*They are preserved forever*” (Ps. 37:28).

All God’s elect are secretly preserved in Christ from eternity, preserved before their calling and preserved unto their calling. We were preserved from condemnation and the second death. We were not preserved from falling with the rest of mankind in the sin and fall of our father Adam. We were not preserved from the depravity and corruption of human nature which all men have by birth from Adam. And we are not preserved from iniquity, transgression, and sin. We are all, by nature, “*children of wrath.*”

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Yet, even in those days gone by, though fallen, depraved, hell-bent “children of wrath,” Jude tells us, and all of Scripture teaches us, that we who now believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and all who shall yet believe on him, were so completely and absolutely preserved, watched over, guarded and protected by our God, by virtue of our union with Christ that it was not possible for us to suffer any real loss or injury by all that we experience in time! We were, even in our wrathful state of unbelief, so preserved that the law could not execute the sentence of condemnation on us, sin could not damn us, and Satan could not destroy us.

Then, after being called to life and faith in Christ, we are preserved still in Christ. No, we are not preserved from indwelling sin, but in spite of indwelling sin. No, we are not preserved from temptations, but in the midst of temptation. No, we are not preserved from doubts and fears and unbelief, but in the midst of them. No, we are not preserved from slips and falls, from acts of sin and attitudes of evil, but in spite of them. Our Savior said, *“I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish”* (John 10:28).

“Preserved in Jesus Christ!” — In Christ we are preserved in sanctification, justification, redemption and grace, preserved as the sons of God and heirs of heavenly glory, preserved in life and faith, and preserved in absolute, indestructible safety and security.

By God’s sov’ reign grace united
 To His Son eternally,
 I can never be divided
 From my cov’nant Surety.
 God’s free love, from everlasting,
 Made me one with His dear Son.
 Blessed union, strong, unchanging,
 I am with my Savior one!

Once in Christ, in Christ forever.
 Thus His promise ever stands.
 Life and death and hell together
 Cannot tear me from His hands!
 Oft I fall, but God unchanging,
 Faithful to His cov’nant stands.
 He will never charge with sinning

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Those for whom His Son was slain.

One with Jesus, one with Jesus,
 By eternal union one!
 One with Jesus, one with Jesus,
 O what wonders grace has done!
 One with Christ from everlasting!
 One with Him upon the tree!
 One with Him on high ascending!
 One with Him eternally!

“Preserved in Jesus Christ!” — What blessed words! What unspeakable blessedness! What unknown wonders are here described! Only in eternity will we be able to see them. Yet, there are some things plainly revealed in the Book of God about the meaning of these words. — *“Preserved in Jesus Christ!”*

- Every form, degree, and method of preservation is implied.
- Every state, condition and circumstance is included.
- Every danger, foe, and weapon formed against us is taken into consideration.

Still, the words are sure. — *“Preserved in Jesus Christ!”*

Though in ourselves we were but worthless, dead, dried vines, fit only to be cut down and cast into the fire, the God of Glory, the God of all grace saw something else in us, something he alone could produce (Isaiah 65:8).

(Isaiah 65:8) “Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one* saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing *is* in it: so will I do for my servants’ sakes, that I may not destroy them all.”

Do you see the picture that is drawn before us here? When a gardener is about to cut down a dried up vine, or about to prune away some of its unfruitful branches, the owner of the vineyard passes by and notices a cluster of new grapes on it. When he does, he cries out to the vine dresser, *“Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it!”*

It looked worthless. It appeared to be needlessly occupying space. Ugly and dried up, the gardener would have cut it down and would have thought that

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was the only thing to be done with it. Nothing in the field is uglier than a dried up vine. But the owner saw a blessing in that which appeared to be worthless.

The Holy Spirit does not leave us there, forcing us to draw out the parallel that is most applicable. He gives us the parallel. Do you see it? — *“So will I do for my servants’ sakes, that I may not destroy them all.”*

Note: Both the chosen and the reprobate are referred to as *“my servants”* because all men, indeed all things are the servants of our God (Pro. 16:4).

God’s elect in this world are the blessing hidden among the nations of the world for which he preserves them.

Read **2 Peter 3:9** one more time. *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*

The only reason why God does not destroy this world right now is this — **There is yet a remnant according to the election of grace who must be saved.** Everything God does in this world is for the elect’s sake. Every benefit of providential mercy that reprobate men enjoy in time is because there lives among them God’s elect, of whom he says, *“Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it.”* This is not my opinion. This is what God says. — *“So will I do for my servants’ sakes.”*

- Once Noah (the blessing) was safely in the ark, God destroyed the rest of the world.
- Once Lot (the blessing) was delivered unto Zoar, God destroyed Sodom.
- Joshua and Caleb (the blessings) entered into the land of promise, though all those who came out of Egypt with them perished under the wrath of God.
- The rest of the world exists and is used by God for his elect, *the blessing in it* (Isa. 43:1-5).

“Who shall calculate or write down in the history of one child of God, much less the whole Church, the wonders of this preserving grace, in the ten thousand times ten thousand instances of it? Preserved in Jesus Christ, before called to Jesus Christ. Preserved in all the after stages of life, when called by grace, until grace is finished in glory. The church in every individual member, may, and

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indeed ought, daily to ponder the melting subject; but we must enter eternity, and look back over the everlasting hills through all the path the Lord hath brought us on our way; before that we shall have a becoming sense, and apprehension, of the unspeakable blessings, contained in these four words, preserved in Jesus Christ.” (Robert Hawker)

PROVIDENTIAL GRACE

Prevenient grace is providential grace, the secret operation of grace that precedes and prepares the way for God’s saving grace. This is illustrated in many ways in the Word of God. I will call your attention to just three aspects of it.

It is formative grace (Gal. 1:15; Jer. 1:5; 2 Tim. 3:15).

(Jeremiah 1:5) “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”

(Galatians 1:15) “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called *me* by his grace,”

(2 Timothy 3:15) “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

It is often seen as restraining grace (1 Sam. 25:13-26; Gen. 20:6—*”Hitherto shalt thou go and no further!”*)

(Genesis 20:6) “And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for **I also withheld thee from sinning against me**: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.”

(1 Samuel 25:13-26) “And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff. (14) But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal’s wife, saying, Behold, David

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sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. (15) But the men *were* very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: (16) They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. (17) Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he *is such* a son of Belial, that *a man* cannot speak to him. (18) Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched *corn*, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid *them* on asses. (19) And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. (20) And it was *so, as* she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert on the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them. (21) Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this *fellow* hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that *pertained* unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. (22) So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that *pertain* to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. (23) And when Abigail saw David, she hastened, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, (24) And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, *upon* me *let this* iniquity *be*: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. (25) Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, *even* Nabal: for as his name *is*, so *is* he; Nabal *is* his name, and folly *is* with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. (26) Now therefore, my lord, *as* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, seeing **the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand,** now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.”

It is sweet, overruling grace (Philemon 15).

(Philemon 1:15) “For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;”

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Illustration: *Gomer! — The Prodigal! — Peter!*

(Hosea 2:8) “For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, *which* they prepared for Baal.”

(Psalms 76:10) “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

How I rejoice and give thanks to God for his free, covenant grace and for his secret, prevenient grace. It is this **prevenient grace that keeps and preserves his elect throughout their days of rebellion unto the day of their calling.**

(Jude 1:1) “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and* called.”

Prevenient grace gives the angels their charge (Heb. 14).

(Hebrews 1:14) “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

As I have already said, our preservation in Christ did not keep us from the sin and fall of our father Adam, because it was never intended so to do. Had that been the case, we would have been kept from all the blessings of redemption and salvation arising from Adam’s transgression. Rather, Adam’s fall was a part of God’s wondrous plan of grace.

“Determined to save, he watched o’er my path
When, Satan’s blind slave, I sported with death.”

It is God’s prevenient grace of which David sang in Psalm 23:6, saying, “*Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow (pursue — chase) me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever!*”

In his wise, adorable and good providence, our heavenly Father works all things together for good to all his elect in prevenient grace (Rom. 8:28-30; 11:33-36).

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(Romans 8:28-30) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

(Romans 11:33-36) “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? (36) For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.”

Turn back to **Isaiah 43**. I want you to see this.

(Isaiah 43:1-6) “But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine. (2) When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. (3) For I *am* the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt *for* thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. (4) Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. (5) Fear not: for I *am* with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; — **Now, watch verse 6. This is God’s command to all creation.** — (6) I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;”

Here is a prophecy that must be fulfilled. Before time is no more the Lord God will “*say to the north, give up; and to the south, keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.*” The Lord our God has a people in this world whom he is determined to save. Their salvation is a matter of certainty. We have every reason, therefore, to throw

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ourselves wholeheartedly into the work of seeking the salvation of God's elect. Our labor will not be in vain!

Our God has many children who are yet far away from him. Though they are not yet saved, though they are lost and scattered among the fallen, depraved sons of Adam, though many may not even have been born yet, all who shall be saved are already God's sons and daughters, adopted by him in eternal, sovereign election (Gal. 4:6; 1 John 3:1; John 10:16). In all nations, among all people, there is a remnant according to the election of grace upon whom God's eye has been set from eternity. He has declared, in his eternal purpose, "*They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels*" (Mal. 3:17).

God has given commandment for the salvation of all his chosen sons and daughters. "*Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.*" To whom is this commandment given? It is given to all of providence. Everything that happens in the mysterious movements of providence is under God's control and works by his sovereign power and purpose for the salvation of his people. Long before regenerating grace comes to the chosen, prevenient grace watches over them, orders their steps and keeps them from going down to the pit, because God has found a ransom for them. This is beautifully illustrated in Hosea 2:5-8.

(Hosea 2:5-8) "For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give *me* my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. (6) Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. (7) And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find *them*: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then *was it* better with me than now. (8) For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, *which* they prepared for Baal."

Read Psalm 107 and see how that providence obeys God's command for the salvation of his elect. — "*Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!*"

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1. O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is good*: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.
2. Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;
3. And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.
4. They **wandered** in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.
5. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.
6. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he delivered them out of their distresses.
7. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.
8. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
9. For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.
10. Such as **sit in darkness** and in the shadow of death, *being* bound in affliction and iron;
11. Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High:
12. Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and *there was* none to help.
13. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saved them out of their distresses.
14. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.
15. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
16. For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.
17. **Fools because of their transgression**, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.
18. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.
19. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saveth them out of their distresses.

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20. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered *them* from their destructions.
21. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
22. And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

23. They that **go down to the sea** in ships, that do business in great waters;
24. These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.
25. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.
26. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.
27. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.
28. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.
29. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.
30. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.
31. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
32. Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

33. He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground;
34. A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.
35. He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.
36. And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation;
37. And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.
38. He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.
39. Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

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40. He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is no way*.
41. Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh *him* families like a flock.
42. The righteous shall see *it*, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.
43. Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

PREPARATORY GRACE

One more thing, and I'll quit, though I haven't yet begun to describe it. Preventive grace is preparatory grace. It is that grace that prepares the chosen, redeemed sinner to receive God's saving grace (Matthew 13:3-9).

(Matthew 13:3-9) "And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; (4) And when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: (5) Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: (6) And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. (7) And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: (8) But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold. (9) Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Sweet, indescribably sweet is that work of God's providence and grace that precedes his grace, prepares the way for his grace, and brings his grace! Just ask any who have experienced it!

- Bartimaeus
- The Woman with an Issue of Blood
- The Lame Man
- The Gadarene
- The Woman Taken in Adultery
- The Dying Thief
- Onesimus
- Iris Johnson, "Thank God for Folsom Prison."

PREVENIENT GRACE

Throughout my days my path's been marked
By God, my Father's, loving heart.
He's ordered every step with care.
I've met His goodness everywhere.
When I was lost and knew Him not,
Prevenient grace marked every spot;
And angels came for God's elect,
Though in rebellion, to protect.

Then in the time and at the place
Which God had purposed by His grace,
The Spirit came and made me live.
God caused His chosen to believe.
Through all my days, since first I saw
That Jesus Christ is all in all,
My Savior has in faithfulness
Sustained and kept me by His grace.

When fallen, He restores my soul,
Forgives my sin, and still upholds
His erring child with love and grace,
And proves His cov'nant faithfulness.
When sick, my Savior makes my bed
And soothes my aching, fainting head.
And when I leave this world of woe,
To God, my faithful God, I'll go!

No more to sin, no more to sigh.
The tears you see will soon be dry.
When I have dropped this robe of flesh,
I'll leave behind all signs of death!
Immortal life awaits my soul!
When I'm with Christ, I shall be whole!
Conformed to Him who died for me
With Him, at last, I shall be free!

(Psalms 21:3) "For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head."

Amen.