

Grace Happens April 26, 2020

Overarching theme: In 2020, FUMC will be a **Go** church!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

The past is the past. There is nothing that can be done about it. The past can only be used to gain wisdom for the future. What can change is the future? When we, as God's people, are willing to follow God in our daily lives, God will make a good way in the future. The way may be bumpy at times and have curves, but the process will be filled with God's love and grace.

Letter to the Romans:

Paul's letter to the Romans was written anywhere from 53 to 58 A.D. Most likely this letter went to believers in Rome, which were mainly house churches. The group of recipients had not formed into a church as of this time. Wesley's notes refer to Priscilla and Aquila being in Rome and hosting disciples at their home. "They were tentmakers as was Paul. Priscilla and Aquila had been among the Jews expelled from Rome by the Roman Emperor Claudius in the year 49 as written by Suetonius. They ended up in Corinth. Paul lived with Priscilla and Aquila for approximately 18 months." Paul wrote Romans from the city of Corinth as he wintered there on his third missionary journey as described in Acts 20:2-3. This is based on Romans 16:1 and 16:23, in regards to a reference to Pheobe in Cenchreae, an eastern port of Corinth. When Paul wrote the Book of Romans, he had been a preacher for some 20 years. He was on his third missionary tour and was looking at going to Rome. He wrote this letter in preparation for going to Rome.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Romans 8:22-23; 28-29; 31-39 (NIV) for sermon focus

Romans 8:22-39 New International Version (NIV)

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But

if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. ²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Questions to ponder about the passages:

What jumps out at you from this passage?

So, bottom line, what do you get out of this passage?

Who helps us in our weakness? How?

What does God work for in our lives?

For what are we predestined? What does that look like?

Besides the Holy Spirit, who is interceding for us?

Who can separate us from the love of God?

How would you explain grace in these verses?

Commentary:

This week starts a series on grace. Many people struggle with what God is doing during times of difficulty, suffering, tragedy, and calamity. Where was God when that happened? Well, the answer is that God was in the midst of it giving grace, strength, and wisdom through the power of the Holy Spirit before we ever knew. In the case of someone's death, God was there to redeem, or receive, that person. There is no place in scripture that says we will not encounter struggle, pain, hurt,

tragedy, and etc. Matter of fact, scriptures remind us through stories and comments that we all will encounter struggle, pain, hurt, tragedy, and etc.

Think on these scriptures:

James 1:12 (NIV)

¹² **Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial** because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

Romans 5:1-5 (NIV)

⁵ Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, **but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.** ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

In our original passage, we find the whole world continues to groan in pain as like child birth. Our flawed world struggles just like we do, because all of creation is marred until the final redemption by God is completed. Until that final day of redemption, our passage is designed to remind us that God is in our midst guiding us with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, while leading us in the resurrection power of Christ Jesus. When we do not know how to pray, or what to pray, the Holy Spirit will intercede for us. So, when you have no words, sit in silence and know the Holy Spirit will speak for you. When you have no words and think God has left the building, be reminded in the scripture that ³⁸ "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." As you go through times of tribulation, struggle, and difficulty, you have a God that loves you; a Holy Spirit that will guide and speak for you; and a Savior that will lead you to be a conqueror. No need to live as a victim, but live as a conqueror knowing that as you live into the image of Christ, you will live into a resurrected life. As you live through your suffering, calamity, or heart ache, and a piece of you dies, new birth can happen through the Grace of God that happens in your life. By persevering, you will find a greater character, and an abundance of hope that God is actively working in your life.

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

In this passage, what is the main lesson you get from it?

How can we describe God's grace in this scripture and through experience?

What does it look like for you to live into the image of Christ?

As you go through struggle, what do you need to focus on to be a conqueror?

What can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus? What? Say it again!

How are you knowing and feeling the grace of God right now?

Activity of for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week:
Romans 8:37 (NRSV)
"37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."
3. How are you a conqueror in Christ? You may repeat to yourself as often as you need, "I am more than a conqueror through Christ."