The journey of the soul onto salvation and redemption begins with the presence of what John Wesley, hereafter referred to only as Wesley, termed prevening or prevenient grace. That is the moralistic, natural conscience described as “All the drawings of the Father…all that light wherewith the Son of God ‘enlighteneth every one the cometh into the world.’” in the sermon, *The Scripture Way of Salvation.* This is the form of grace that is all present in the world and is experienced by believers and non-believers alike. This is the Spirit of God acting as an intercessor, providing a certain safety for even souls that do not yet know Him or even seek to know Him. Most simply put, this is the embodiment of God’s perfect Love for all His creation that, regardless of the response of the being that is cared for, He unabashedly and unyieldingly provides protection from the extremes of sin sickness and seeks that the soul would come to experience conviction through grace.

It is an extrapolation of prevenient grace that some call convicting grace that draws one to God. This is not so much the body of grace that protects the soul from harm and danger of entrapment by giving it a sense of direction, but rather this is the part of grace that pulls the soul toward its beginning of understanding that God is all for us and the notion that, indeed, we should seek His glory for justification.

“Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins; and, what is necessarily implied therein, our acceptance with God” (Wesley, *The Scripture Way of Salvation).* By name, justifying grace within Wesleyan theology is the proxy by which the human soul is granted justification, that is pardon and forgiveness. We are enlightened to the ways of sin within the world, and while we are given the understanding that we are able to be forgiven, at the point of initial justification we do not always have the assurance that we actually have been forgiven. This form of grace will compel us to further ourselves in God’s perfect Love, for we will begin to understand that it is only by God’s mercy that we shall have peace and abundance in life.

This leads to a point of discussion where I am not so certain that I fully agree with Wesley’s own assertion. For he states that “…at the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, sanctification begins. In that instant we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit: there is a real as well as a relative change…” Now, the conclusion that I draw from this previous statement and the language used therein, it seems to me that Wesley believes that what most would nowadays commonly refer to as ‘salvation’ is achieved at the moment of justification or initial sanctification. However, I cannot say I either wholly agree or disagree. I believe the journey of salvation is one that is certainly personal and therefore is as unique to an individual as the pattern of ridges and valleys in the prints of their fingers. I believe that at the moment of justification a believer is born, but in my opinion, this does not entail that one has fully, or even partially, submitted to God’s reign but that they will have simply acknowledge it to exist. This point aside, I can certainly agree that at the moment of justification, a true and distinct change will be wrought in the heart of the newly founded believer, and this change will be one that draws them into a spiritual healing where the wounds of the soul caused by a life in this broken world may be repaired. This change is known as repentance. It is at this time when the soul begins to truly be regenerated, and life becomes a constant struggle (not to be viewed in the negative connotation of the word) for the entirety of God.

Upon the moment of justification, and in tandem with the process of regeneration, a soul will most assuredly endeavor to grow with faith for that is the work of sanctification. To become stronger and to become more assured of the goodness that is God, this will become the *modus operandi* of the newly revived soul. We will each strive to gain and root within ourselves a deeper assurance of our own justification, hoping that we would not simply think but know that indeed we are forgiven in the eyes of God, and between the moments of justification and true sanctification, this will undoubtedly become a reality.

The unfortunate truth of this statement, however, is that many times, once one has come into the beginning of this consecration and have finally felt this true assurance, they will fall under the impression that sin has altogether been removed from their lives. They begin to fall to the idea that salvation is the notion of “perfection in performance” rather than subscribing to Wesley’s definition of Christian perfection, that is “perfect in the Love of God.” They may grow to believe that they are wholly above sin for they may believe that they have been made holy and righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ to be spoken on later, but this is a state that seldom lasts for any substantial length of time. In my pastoral ministry, I illustrate this point as follows: When a person first comes into contact with their Maker, when the spirit and Spirit come to meet for the first time, many will feel overcome with a surge of passion that courses through their whole being. It is as though someone has lit up an inferno beneath you, and now your blood is boiling hot. In these beginning stages, it is very easy to worship God and acknowledge all that He has done for you, but as time wears on, you will come to realize your heart may have been changed, but your body and mind still reside very much in the same pain-stricken world, and you will come to understand that that same world seeks to smother that fire that drives you. It is up to you that you continue onward! It is up to you that you persist! You must actively make the choice to continue striving for God’s grace to fall upon all people! Because if you don’t, certainly the flame will die out.

The meaning behind this illustration is much the same as Wesley speaks when he writes “but it [the inference of being perfected by faith] is seldom long before they are undeceived, finding sin was only suspended, not destroyed.” Upon the experience of this epiphany, one will have come to a crossroad. Some people are honestly discouraged to know that this first experience was not the be all, end all in the experience of salvation. This wounds them deeply, and they struggle to find a motivation to continue pressing onwards feeling as though surely any future experience would only be temporary in nature as well. On another hand, though, some will understand that while this has been a temporary victory, there is one that is long standing in the wings. These are those who will be invigorated and press forward into growth through grace, for they seek the fullness of sanctification.

This desire sets them toward faith-based works that in essence work to grow the spirit of the individual closer to God, but also seeks to expose others who may not have been so fortunate yet to have heard the greatness of the gospel to the glory of salvation through Christ and the promises of the Father. One that is in the throes of this type of grace will be compelled to such tasks as seeking out those who may have backslid once ‘their flames have been smothered out.’ (An aside I feel led to write on quickly: How marvelous is this design by our Father that those naturally inclined to strong and resilient faith, are then compelled within themselves to lift up others who are not so inherently gifted with that particular gift!) By these “works suitable for repentance,” an individual will come to be fulfilled with a heart that has been made whole in love.

It is through the process of growth in grace, again brought through the true work of sanctification, that one experiences the wholeness of what Wesley called the “full salvation,” that is entire sanctification. Through a journey of learning, discovery, and continual repentance brought through the earnest change of heart wrought by the gifts of the Spirit in justification and regeneration, one comes “unto perfection” in entire sanctification. It is important here to note again, that Wesley did not believe this perfection to be one of performance but rather one of love. This perfected love is the penultimate goal of all Christian salvation for it is at this point that a person will completely recognize the truest understanding of righteousness.

It seems to me now that Wesley believed that the idea of imputed righteousness through vesting oneself in Christ alone, while imperative to the grand scheme of the salvation plan, carried with it the risk of a somewhat *laissez faire* Christianity as witnessed by the practice of Antinomianism in his day. The condition of such a symptom is that people would stagnate within their faith, and if such a condition is to be witnessed, a soul would never truly be perfected in love. Wesley seems to have witnessed many times that people satisfied with the idea of imputed righteousness would consider themselves accounted for, and in such a state, never harbor any compassion for their fellow man. This may well be a condition that is still experienced today, depending on your outlook on to what extent one man should serve another, but nonetheless the imputing of righteousness is not, in Wesleyan theology, the finale but rather a preview into what redemption really means.

For succeeding true and entire sanctification, a person still has room to grow in grace, to strive for the Spirit, and to seek to be made more complete yet. While one sees in the writings of Wesley and John Fletcher, and in the explanation of the idea of Pentecostal dispensation, that sanctification is brought about through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, this does not mean that a person has been perfected in action but rather simply in spirit. It is now that they have this perfection of spirit that one is able to strive for the truest and most fully developed form of redemption. For in redemption, we are not to be satisfied while crutched on the imputed righteousness that we experience in the moment of initial sanctification, but that through God’s own sanctifying grace, we may actually be imparted with righteousness. Some believe this to be the completion of sanctification, some call it complete consecration, other yet simply glorification, but I believe that this moment when an individual, having experienced an unmistakable assurance of pardon for their sins and justification of their actions before God and having had their heart made perfect in love enabling them to fully and whole-heartedly give themselves over to the service of the kingdom, may take hold of that once imputed righteousness given by the life and succeeding sacrifice of Christ, and by the will, power, glory, and grace of God be able to not only wear it, but rather have it integrated into their own personal identity, being made themselves righteous thereby in the eyes and heart of our God. This is what I believe Wesley thought of as redemption, the ultimate goal of Christian salvation, and altogether what I believe Wesley considered the order of salvation.