

**Blessed Assurance:
A Pentecostal Theology of Grace**

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues for the retrieval of a Wesleyan-informed Pentecostal spirituality that can sustain contemporary Global Pentecostalism as a grace-filled, lifelong journey with God and others. Rooted in the Wesleyan tradition, Pentecostal theology is inherently experiential, Jesus-focused, and articulated through the full-gospel confession of Jesus as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, Spirit-Baptizer, and Coming King. Drawing on John Wesley's theology of grace, the paper describes grace as both God's unearned love and the Holy Spirit's transformative presence, actively working within believers and the Christian community. Salvation is viewed as both instantaneous and ongoing, beginning with prevenient grace and continuing through justification, sanctification, Spirit baptism, and ultimately glorification. The paper emphasizes that salvation is a dynamic, synergistic relationship in which divine grace enables human cooperation without reducing salvation to antinomianism or moralistic legalism. Human response is essential. God enables us to respond in faith to the Gospel. Through worship, repentance, sacramental participation, spiritual disciplines, and Spirit-empowered mission, believers grow in holiness and mature in love. This paper argues that a nuanced Wesleyan Pentecostal theology of grace best maintains both God's unconditional grace and genuine human response. By framing salvation both christologically and pneumatologically, the salvific journey is understood as a transformative, lifelong, Spirit-filled, and empowered journey of holy love through faithful discipleship.

Hebrews 6:10-12

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have served his people and continue to serve them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Today, I will address the importance of retrieving and reinforcing a Wesleyan-influenced Pentecostal spirituality that better sustains contemporary Pentecostal spirituality as a grace-filled, lifelong journey with God and others. Presently, Global Pentecostalism exists as a theologically diverse, multiethnic, and racially diverse global phenomenon. Pentecostalism is a vibrant, organic tradition(s), often rich, varied, paradoxical, confrontational and consoling.¹ “Pentecostal theology is rooted in experiential, oral, and lived tradition” and is “a theology that is sung, felt, and experienced through the Holy Spirit.”² As such, it more readily migrates into new linguistic communities, regions, and geographic locations than other Christian traditions.³ Historically, Pentecostalism emerged from the Wesleyan holiness womb, as persons experienced a distinct moment of God’s grace called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Early on, the Spirit baptism experience was framed within Wesleyan theological understandings, with minor influences from other 20th-century revivalistic, restoration, Anabaptist, and Pietistic traditions.⁴ What holds Pentecostalism together narratively is its commitment to the full gospel message, as articulated through the doxological confessions of Jesus as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, Spirit-Baptizer, and

¹ See Michael Wilkenson and Jorg Haustien, eds., *The Pentecostal World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2023).

² Arlene M. Sanchez Walsh, “Pentecostals,” in *Handbook of Latina/o Theologies*, eds. E. D. Aponte and M. A. De La Torre (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2006), 199-205.

³ See Todd M. Johnson, “Counting Pentecostals Worldwide” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Global Pentecostalism*, ex. ed, Michael Wilkinson (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), xiii-xxx.

⁴ Dale M. Coulter, “Recovering the Wesleyan Vision of Pentecostalism: 5 Theses. SPS Presidential Address 2018,” *PNEUMA* 4 (2018): 457, 457-488.

King, soon returning.⁵ As Pentecostalism moves into other areas, you may hear variations on these redemptive blessings of Christ's atonement, such as Jesus as Liberator or Jesus as Deliverer. All these variations would still be part of the full gospel message⁶ because such confessions focus on Jesus and his redemptive benefits.

The paper will develop a Pentecostal theology of grace. John Wesley, like the Reformers, emphasized that God's grace is free, unmerited favor, that is, it is unconditional. However, and even more importantly for Wesley, the heart of grace is the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit at work restoring the image of God in the person.⁷ God's "grace *inspires* and *enables*, but does not *overpower*."⁸ God's grace is free, and yet it elicits human cooperation, which is understood and experienced as synergistic energy.⁹ That is, God's grace enables us, as Christians, to work with God, but our works do not save us; God's divine grace does. For Wesley, God works so that we can work, and you must work.¹⁰ Therefore, according to God's will and good pleasure, we ought to do good works.¹¹ This is in accordance with the Apostle Paul, who wrote,

⁵ Kenneth J. Archer, "Pentecostal Theology as Story: Participating in God's Mission" in *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology*, ed. Wolfgang Vondey (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 40-50. See also Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017).

⁶ For a brief explanation of the Full Gospel, see Kenneth J. Archer, "Full Gospel" in *Handbook of Pentecostal Christianity*, ed. Adam Smith (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois Press, 2012), 89-91, and for a more sustained and further developed presentation, see Wolfgang Vondey, "The Full Gospel: A Liturgical Hermeneutic of Pentecost" in *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology*, ed. Wolfgang Vondey (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 172-182.

⁷ Kenneth J. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1997), 19. Henry H. Knight, *John Wesley: Optimist of Grace* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), 143. Also, Don Thorsen, *Calvin VS Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2013), xiv-xv.

⁸ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1994), 86.

⁹ John Wesley, "The Circumcision of the Heart" Sermon 17 -1773, in *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, eds. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1991), 23.

¹⁰ Henry H. Knight III, *John Wesley: Optimist of Grace* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), 74.

¹¹ John Wesley, "On Working out our own Salvation" sermon 85 -1785, in *John Wesley's Sermons; An Anthology*, eds. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1991), 487, 485-492.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves; it is a gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.¹²

Additionally, the significance of sacramental ordinances such as the Eucharist, Water Baptism, and foot washing will be affirmed as essential mediated opportunities to experience God's free and merciful grace intimately and immediately in community worship. The sacramental ordinances sustain us in our salvific journey, enabling us to stay in step with the Holy Spirit.¹³ For it is the Holy Spirit that transforms us on our journey. God’s grace is dynamic and relational. God’s grace is working on, in, and through us.

Salvation is a gift of divine grace made possible through the atoning work of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ “Salvation includes all the redemptive benefits of God” and cannot be reduced to one static moment, nor to one individual experience.¹⁵ Salvation addresses human alienation, offense, sin, and separation from God. Salvation redeems us from sin, delivers us from demonic forces, and restores us to a right relationship with God and creation. Initial salvation brings the first taste of ultimate salvation, which is glorification into our hearts. Salvation is about the restoration of our humanity as created in God’s image and likeness and the healing of all creation. Salvation is the cure to the deadly virus of sin that has contaminated all of creation. In this Wesleyan-Pentecostal perspective, we are saved by grace, through grace, unto grace. Salvation, then, should be understood as an overarching therapeutic relational concept that is both instantaneous

¹² Ephesians 2:8-10. All scripture quotations are from the NIV unless noted otherwise. I am aware of the scholarly debate concerning Pauline authorship of this letter. I am going with the Implied author, which is Paul.

¹³ See Kenneth J. Archer, “Nourishment for Our Journey: The Pentecostal *Via Salutis* and Sacramental Ordinances” in *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader*, ed. Chris E. W. Green, (Leiden, Netherlands and Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publications, 2016), 144-160.

¹⁴ See for example Hosea 13:4; Mathhew 1:21; Luke 2:11; Mark 10:45; John 3:16-17; Acts 4:12; Hebrews 9:15, 12:2; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:6; 1 John 2:2, 4:10.

¹⁵ Kenneth J. Archer, *The Gospel Revisited: Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Worship and Witness* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2011), 56.

and gradual and concerns all of creation.¹⁶ However, I am focusing on the redeemed community.¹⁷

The first operation of grace is prevenient grace, which enables all persons to respond to God without coercion and culminates in glorifying grace for God's followers. It is God, who is love, who saves us.¹⁸ For Wesley, love is God's "reigning attribute" which "governs all other aspects of God's nature."¹⁹ Certainly, for Wesley, God's love is defined and exhibited in God's actions and promises as found in Scripture, especially in the life and death of Jesus Christ.²⁰ Because God is love, we were meant to have love as our governing disposition, as the fount of our motivation and desire. Our deep affection is love, and we are called to love God with all our being and to love our neighbors, which includes our enemies as well. As Jesus said, such love is the basis of all the Law and the Prophets.²¹

We begin our salvation with Jesus, and we end with Jesus, for Jesus is the alpha and omega.²² The Holy Spirit is the transformative, powerful personal presence of God who mediates the Spirit of Christ as the Holy Spirit works redemptively in our lives. The Holy Spirit serves as the connection between God and us. The Spirit makes Christ present to us, enabling us to know and experience him and his atoning work.²³ Personal salvation is an experiential journey (the *via salutis*) in the Christian community with the triune God.²⁴ As a graced journey, we have a clear

¹⁶ Henry H. Knight III, "The Transformation of the Human Heart: The Place of Conversion in Wesley's Theology" in *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*, eds. Kenneth J. Collins and John H. Tyson. (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2001), 43.

¹⁷ For a comprehensive, holistic view of salvation, see Howard A Synder with Joel Scandrett, "*Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace*" (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011).

¹⁸ 1 John 4:7-8.

¹⁹ Henry H. Knight III, "John Wesley's Fuller Understanding of Grace" in *The Truth About Grace: Spirit-Empowered Perspectives*, ed. Vinson Synan (Lake Mary, FL: Charism House, 2018), 49.

²⁰ Knight III, "John Wesley's Fuller Understanding of Grace" (2018), 49.

²¹ Matthew 22:37-40.

²² Revelation 22:13.

²³ Simeon Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2022), 56.

²⁴ Archer, *The Gospel Revisited* (2011), 56.

beginning and a clear end; our end is God, for God is coming for his people, and our beginning is God, for God has created us in his image and likeness and has made atonement for us. God's grace is actively at work from the beginning until the end, calling us to personal faithfulness with God and with God's creation. That is, it is God's merciful grace that enables human faith, which is also a gift from God, all of which is grounded in God's holy love. We trust God, whose atoning work was made possible by the Holy Spirit's anointing of Jesus. Jesus is our atonement and our High Priest.²⁵ The Spirit is our sojourning Counselor. We put our trust, our faith, in the triune God alone.

I offer the following as a working definition of grace. Grace, as a theological concept, is first and foremost relational. Grace is the triune God's unmerited love towards us, and for us. "For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Grace has two dimensions: Grace is unconditional, unmerited love. You cannot earn it, you cannot work for it, you simply are loved. Such is grace, a prior act of God invading our lives, and yet a love that enables us to love in right and proper ways.²⁶ Second, grace is the Holy Spirit's powerful presence at work in creation, especially in redeemed humanity. For Wesley, "grace at its heart is the power of the Holy Spirit; thus, we can approach God with an expectant, although not a presumptive, faith."²⁷ Because grace is the Holy Spirit, it is relational, personal, transformative, and experiential.²⁸ We affirm that grace, as a relational concept involving the Holy Spirit, infiltrates our being in such a way that faith or confidence, or trust, if you will, is grounded experientially in the Crucified Christ. Believers are no longer the

²⁵ This covers Jesus earthly ministry, from the Son of God's incarnation to his ascension.

²⁶ Henry H. Knight III, *John Wesley: Optimist of Grace* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), xiii.

²⁷ Knight III, *Optimist of Grace*, 2018, 143.

²⁸ For a sustained discussion on Christian experience from a pneumatological understanding, see Simeon Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2022).

same; they are transformed beyond just their legal standing before God. Through receiving grace, they are (re)formed and (re)directed, enabling love, holiness, joy and generosity—empowered by the Spirit—that are integral and fundamental to expressing personal and communal salvation.²⁹ God changes us, not all at once, but as we journey with him in a covenant relationship.

The grace of God always prompts a response from those who receive it; therefore, God alone initiates a grace-filled relationship, and the Spirit calls us to respond positively, enabling us to cooperate faithfully with God's grace. Grace is always redemptive and therefore generates redemptive encounters. Hence, a response is not optional but necessary; it is impossible to ignore God's grace. We may resist and grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) or respond positively, cooperating with the Spirit. Positive responses provide opportunities for sanctifying grace to perfect us in holy love and to reinforce our assurance of salvation.

Paul stated in Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.³⁰

John Wesley saw salvation, from the beginning, preliminary stages of grace, to the very end, as one continuous work of God's grace.³¹ Such grace is not cheap, but costly, not a grace where anything goes.

Jesus said,

²⁹ Joh M. G. Barckley, *Paul and the Power of Grace*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 142.

³⁰ Titus 2:11-14.

³¹ See John Wesley, "The Scriptural Way of Salvation," sermon 4 -1785, in *John Wesley's Sermons; An Anthology*, eds. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1991), 372-380, 372.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.³²

Jesus taught us that those who have been welcomed into his Kingdom are expected to serve faithfully (Mark 10:41-45), to forgive regularly (Matt. 6:12), to give generously (Luke 19:1-10), to bear fruit consistently (Luke 13:6-9), and to love rightly (John 13:34-35). These are just some of the expected results of salvation that Jesus expected from his followers.³³

Additionally, as recorded in Acts, we view the early Christian community as continuing Jesus' ministry through the work of the Great Commission. As a group of graced, empowered, prophetic people, they were heralding the reign of God, teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ, and embodying a radical, counter-cultural community within the Roman Empire.³⁴

They were a people marked by their Christian lifestyle, driven by their passionate love for God's Kingdom. Such loving desire for God, his reign, mission, and people were fueled by their commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and by their fiery baptism with the Holy Spirit. In other words, God's grace was working, and so they worked with God's Spirit. Their human agency was not passive or overwhelmed by God's grace to the point of being unable to resist, but rather, they actively cooperated with God. They were growing, repenting, and submitting as they engaged the work of God for the sake of the world.³⁵ They were not sinless, yet they were at different stages in the salvific journey with God, being perfected in holiness. Once again, grace is God's unmerited love towards us and the Holy Spirit's work in us and through us. Good works

³² Matthew 28:18-20.

³³ Barckley, *Paul and the Power of Grace* (2020), 150.

³⁴ Kenneth J. Archer, "The Holy Spirit and the Early Church in the Book of Acts: The Global Mission of the Messianic Community" in *Holy Spirit: Unfinished Agenda*, ed. Johnson T. K. Lim (Singapore: Word N Works, 2015), 103.

³⁵ Archer, "The Holy Spirit and the Early Church" (2015), 103.

do not merit further grace; they are the products or fruit of God's grace, testifying to our salvation.

In the remainder of the paper, I will develop the Wesleyan-Pentecostal understanding of grace as a dynamic synergism in conversation with the Calvinistic Reformed monergistic perspective and the hyper-grace movements to provide further clarity on my understanding of a Pentecostal theology of grace.³⁶

In Reformed, Hyper-grace, and Wesleyan theology, grace is necessary, and all three groups would agree that without grace, salvation is impossible and that salvation is the result of Christ's atoning work. The issue concerns how God's grace works and its efficacy, the degree to which human agency is involved, whether grace can be resisted, and once regenerated, whether one can abandon their relationship with God and thus enter an apostate condition. In other words, can a regenerated person eventually lose their salvation? To be clear, the person who loses their salvation, the apostate person, has abandoned and rejected God over time. God has not abandoned them but has given them over to their desire. It is difficult for a Christian to abandon the God who loves them and saves them, but not impossible. If a person can repent, then they have not become apostate.

When considering the Wesleyan understanding of God's grace, recall that this is grounded in God's love. Thus, one should keep in mind how love relates to the workings of grace. "Mercy is God's love toward the individual. It forgives, embraces, and accepts (*justification*). Power is God's love within the individual. It transforms and makes new

³⁶ For a popular work representing the Hyper-grace movements, see Joseph Prince, *Destined to Reign: The Secret to Effortless Success, Wholeness and Virtuous Living* (Shippensburg, PA: Harrison House Publishers, 2007) and Andrew Womack, *You Already Got It! So Quit Trying To Get It* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Harrison House, 2006). For an introduction to Calvinism, see James K. A. Smith, *Letters to a Young Calvinist: An Invitation to the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2010). For a cordial comparison of Calvinism and Wesleyanism, see Don Thorsen, *Calvin vs Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013).

(*regeneration and sanctification*).”³⁷ Clearly, the key to Wesley’s soteriological understanding is his grasp of how God’s love works as grace.

For Wesley, the three modes of grace prior to resurrection/glorification are prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. If you can picture a house or an apartment, it can aid in understanding Wesley’s understanding of the modes of grace.³⁸ If we cooperate rightly with prevenient grace, it will bring us to the porch or door of the house. As a result of conviction, one turns to Jesus, experiences justifying grace, and is born again. Justifying grace is the threshold of the doorway, and once we pass through it, we are immediately in the room, which is sanctifying grace. All of these are experiences along the journey with God, with the goal being that we move towards Christian perfection, that is, perfecting in love and holiness.³⁹

Because of sin, we cannot, in our own depraved humanity, turn to Christ. Sin has so pervaded and corrupted humans that they are incapable of turning to God; humans are born depraved. In Wesleyanism, prevenient or preliminary grace is what comes before justifying grace. It flows from God’s love, and God’s love is toward all people, every person. Prevenient grace restores a measure of humanity’s ability to respond to and cooperate with God’s grace. This assisting is a vital relational dimension of how God’s grace works. By God’s grace, people are freed up to respond, and they cooperate with God’s grace; hence, they have free will because of prevenient grace. Prevenient grace is the light of Christ, which shines on everyone (John 1:4-5); it is universal.⁴⁰ This is not justifying grace, but the grace that comes before, which enables the rest of the modes of grace. Such grace is necessary for the following modes of grace to operate

³⁷ Dale Coulter, “A Wesleyan Understanding of Grace and Works,” <https://seedbed.com/wesleyan-understanding-grace-works/>.

³⁸ Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 27, 42.

³⁹ See, for example, John Wesley, “Christian Perfection,” sermon 40 -1785, in *John Wesley’s Sermons; An Anthology*, eds. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1991), 70-84.

⁴⁰ Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation* (2007), 73-76.

as a dynamic synergism. Everyone born has been graced with this preliminary grace; one comes to know the grace of God before one personally knows the God of grace.

Wesleyan theology stresses God's universal desire to save all people, empowering everyone to respond to the gospel through prevenient, or preliminary, grace. Reformed theology highlights God's sovereign choice to save specific individuals, the elect; hence, it is monergistic in nature. Because humans are totally depraved, one cannot turn to God out of one's own nature. For Calvin, God has chosen persons to be saved before the creation of the world. It has nothing to do with what the person may do; it simply is God's choice alone. Whereas Wesley can talk about God's foreknowledge and human free will, Calvin talks of God's providence and predestination. "God's sovereignty and providence represent Calvin's 'determinative principle.'"⁴¹ Calvin said, "that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction."⁴² God works all this not according to foreknowledge, for there is no such thing for Calvin, but according to his decrees through the work of providence, which are decided before creation.⁴³

In Reformed theology, if you have been chosen, then you are part of the elect. The elect person experiences God's effectual grace, which operates as monergism (one energy and God does all the work). The Spirit will cause you to be born again, and then faith and repentance will follow. Grace is irresistible and unconditional for the elect. God alone saves. For the rest of humanity, the non-elect, they also experience grace, which is called common grace. This grace is

⁴¹ Thorsen, *Calvin vs Wesley* (2013), 3.

⁴² John T. McNeill, ed., *Calvin: Institutes of Christian Religion* volume 2 (Pennsylvania, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 2.931.

⁴³ John T. McNeill, ed., *Calvin: Institutes of Christian* (1960), 2.932.

non-redemptive but can alleviate some suffering, restrain evil, and maintain a measure of societal order.⁴⁴

In Wesleyanism, prevenient grace is for everyone. When properly responded to, it can lead to conviction and regeneration. At conversion, one experiences God's justifying grace. Like the Reformed, Wesley understood this as a forensic declaration by God, in which God forgave and accepted believers. God's favor now rests upon them. Forgiveness brings a change in the relationship from alienation to reconciliation. They were regenerated and adopted into his family. As a result, the individual's experience provides witness of the Spirit that they indeed are a child of God. For "the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Rom, 8:16). This experience of justifying grace brings assurance of our salvation.⁴⁵ This is initial sanctification at work in us; just as the righteousness of Christ covers us, so too does the Spirit bring internal transformation. The goal of conversion is to enable one to become a loving person according to God's ways. Justification brings regeneration; thus, one has opened the door and crossed the threshold of justifying grace and enters the main room of the house—sanctification.

A Wesleyan view of ongoing confession of sin is essential for maintaining a relationship with God.⁴⁶ In some Hyper Grace movements, repentance is a one-time change of mind. At conversion, one repents, and one receives the imputed righteousness of Christ. At that moment, all their sins, past, present, and future, have been forgiven. They have been forgiven of everything and stand perfected because of the imputed righteousness of Christ. The Gospel, or

⁴⁴ Thorsen, *Calvin vs Wesley* (2013), 52.

⁴⁵ Douglas Strong, "A Real Christian is an Abolitionist: Conversion and Antislavery Activism in Early American Methodism," in *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*, eds. Kenneth J. Collins and John H. Tyson (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 69-82.

⁴⁶ John Wesley, "The Repentance of Believers," sermon 14 -1767, in *John Wesley's Sermons; An Anthology*, eds. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 405-417.

Good News, is finished.⁴⁷ Everything they need for a successful life has been provided for them in the moment of regeneration and has been given to their born-again spirit. For them, the law is dealt with and is completely obsolete. If attention is given to the law, they are no longer relying on what Jesus did for them on the cross. In more extreme hyper-grace movements, even asking for forgiveness for sin implies that Christ's sacrifice was insufficient and that one has slipped back into the legalism of works righteousness.⁴⁸ For some, the human spirit is born again and remains sinless.⁴⁹ This is an extreme, static, positional view of justification and sanctification.⁵⁰ This perspective locates personhood in the human spirit alone, which is already perfect.⁵¹ Such a view creates serious problems for a biblical understanding of the human as a composite being of body, soul, and spirit. It undermines the importance of resurrection and the glorification of the human body, soul, and spirit. As well as the understanding that training in righteousness takes place over time (2 Tim. 3:16-17, and Heb. 12:10-11).

In Wesleyanism, sanctifying grace, like justifying grace, is a work of God alone, received by faith in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. Justification is what God does for us through Christ, and sanctification is what God does in us by his Holy Spirit.⁵² Sanctifying grace is instantaneous,

⁴⁷ See Andrew Womack, *You've Already Got It! So Quit, Trying To Get It* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Harrison House, 2006), especially 23, 31, 69, 73, 74, 111. For their understanding of Finished work, see *Destined to Reign: The Secret to Effortless Success, Wholeness and Virtuous Living* (Shippensburg, PA: Harrison House Publishers, 2007), 1-10.

⁴⁸ Joseph Prince, *Destined to Reign: The Secret to Effortless Success, Wholeness and Virtuous Living* (Shippensburg, PA: Harrison House Publishers, 2007), 11-18.

⁴⁹ Womack, *You've Already Got It* (2006), 39-41.

⁵⁰ In fairness, most Grace teachers are concerned about ongoing sin in Christians' lives. For example, Joseph Prince has stated that, "If you hear any 'grace' teaching that tells you it is alright to sin...my advice to you is flee from that teaching. You have been exposed to counterfeit grace", p 228, Joseph Prince "Beware of Counterfeit Grace" in Vinson Synan, ed., *The Truth About Grace: Spirit-Empowered Perspectives* (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2018), 225-240. Furthermore, Prince stated that "true grace teaches progressive sanctification" (237).

⁵¹ For this paragraph, I am drawing on Womack, *You've Already Got It* (2006).

⁵² John Wesley, "Justification by Faith" sermon 5—1746, in *John Wesley's Sermons; An Anthology*, eds. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1991), 114, 111-121.

as in initial sanctification, and progressive or gradual.⁵³ Because we are loved by God and have received the impartation of the Holy Spirit at initial sanctification, we grow in God's love to love more fully as God intended for us. Sanctification rips out the root of sin, thus breaking its power, but not removing its presence in the world. Sin is an ongoing challenge, but the Christian is no longer held in its captivity. Sanctification is the restoration of the image of God within us. As we cooperate with God's grace and the Holy Spirit, we are developing and perfecting ourselves in holy love. Sin remains a serious reality, and thus we develop and grow in our humanity through repentance, spiritual disciplines, and participation in the sacraments.⁵⁴ As has been said, grace is the dynamic energy of the Spirit, enabling, inspiring, convicting (John 16:8), but not overpowering the individual in obeying the greatest commandments, hence obeying God.⁵⁵

Christian Perfection, or entire sanctification, is the most controversial teaching in Wesley's theology.⁵⁶ Wesley went to great pains to define and defend it.⁵⁷ Christian perfection does not mean perfect bodily health, infallible judgment, nor does it remove temptation. It also does not imply that we stop violating God's will, as involuntary transgressions can still occur. Those who are perfected continue to face temptation and need to pray for forgiveness. It represents perfection in love for God and neighbor, not absolute perfection.⁵⁸ One has been free

⁵³ Fred Sanders, *Wesley: On the Christian Life; The Heart Renewed in Love* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013), 191-193.

⁵⁴ For the above paragraph, I am drawing on the following: Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of his Teaching on Christian Doctrine*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 246-252.

⁵⁵ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 86.

⁵⁶ Henry H. Knight III, "Christian Perfection", accessed May 17, 2026, <https://foundationforevangelism.org/2022/12/07/christian-perfection/>.

⁵⁷ See, for example, John Wesley, "Christian Perfection" sermon 40 – 1741 in *John Wesley's Sermons; An Anthology*, eds. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1991), 69-84 and his more extensive defense authored in 1766, "A plain Account of Christian Perfection" <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/w/wesley/perfection/cache/perfection.pdf>, accessed June 30, 2026.

⁵⁸ Henry H. Knight III, "Christian Perfection", accessed May 17, 2026, <https://foundationforevangelism.org/2022/12/07/christian-perfection/>.

from the root of sin and has the mind of Christ; no longer willfully sins against God's known laws.⁵⁹ It is not a static position. Christian perfection is the manifestation of continuous holiness of life in union with God, not mechanical flawlessness.⁶⁰

Christian perfection is solely a gift of grace, received through faith. It is sought by believers who, through grace, are open to accepting it. Christian perfection comes gradually and suddenly, initiated by God. It is promised to everyone who believes. Many today, as in Wesley's era, find it hard to accept this teaching. However, "Wesley believed that pursuing Christian perfection would not harm us because, as we do so, we continue to be sanctified and grow daily in our knowledge and love of God."⁶¹

I am not advocating for the possibility of entire sanctification per se; I am arguing that the room called sanctification is large, and there are many sanctifying experiences along our redemptive journey with God in community. We should be open to the ongoing, instantaneous experience of sanctifying and charismatic grace, as well as the graced opportunities for growing in holy love. Such experiences mark us in definitive ways.

The Calvinistic understanding of grace emphasizes God's sovereign election and irresistible grace, which operate independently or in a compatible manner with human choice, ensuring the salvation of the elect. Hyper-grace theology often magnifies forgiveness and grace to the point of neglecting repentance, obedience, and ongoing sanctification, creating the potential for antinomianism. A Wesleyan understanding of grace emphasizes that grace is universal and requires a human response (synergism) for salvation and sanctification. Prevenient grace is necessary for human free will and for the rest of the Holy Spirit's modes of grace.

⁵⁹ Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 297-303, 279.

⁶⁰ See John Wesley, "Christian Perfection" sermon 40 – 1741 (1991), 69-84.

⁶¹ Henry H. Knight III, "Christian Perfection", accessed May 17, 2026, <https://foundationforevangelism.org/2022/12/07/christian-perfection/>.

In what follows, I will sketch a Pentecostal Theology of Grace using the framework of the Fivefold gospel. By affirming the work of Christ Jesus' atonement through the fivefold gospel and using it as an outline, I will then identify a corresponding mode of the Spirit's operation of Grace in the community and the believer. A Pentecostal understanding of salvation is Christologically shaped and Pneumatologically grounded. Furthermore, I will highlight the importance of sacramental ordinances, which are connected to the Fivefold gospel. Sacramental ordinances shape us as Christ followers, affirming that they are mediated means of experiencing God's grace directly in community. It is the Holy Spirit that sustains us throughout our journey.

Recall that God alone initiates a grace-filled relationship and calls us to respond positively by faithfully cooperating with God's grace. A Pentecostal would affirm that grace is a dynamic relational synergism with two aspects: it is unmerited favor and the Holy Spirit's powerful presence at work in creation, especially within redeemed humanity. God's grace enables persons to cooperate with God, but our works do not save us—God's divine grace alone does. Our works in cooperation with God's Spirit stand as a testimony to God's saving grace

Pentecostal theology is centered on the dynamic, synergistic activity of the Holy Spirit and is expressed narratively through the full gospel confession of Jesus as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, Spirit-Baptizer, and Coming King. Jesus is the acting subject; Jesus saves, sanctifies, and baptizes in the Holy Spirit, and the King is soon coming.⁶² Yet corresponding to and in tandem with the work of Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit. "When the Father sends his Word, he always sends his Breath. In their joint mission, the Spirit and Son are distinct but inseparable."⁶³ The Holy Spirit's modes of grace correspond to the work of Christ and are grounded in

⁶² Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 84-85.

⁶³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), 181.

prevenient grace, which provides for the other modes: regenerating, sanctifying, charismatic, healing, and glorifying grace.⁶⁴

For each doxological confession associated with the Fivefold gospel, I will identify a sacramental ordinance.⁶⁵ The purpose is to affirm the importance of the ecclesiastical context for the working of the Holy Spirit through the sacramental ordinances on the way of salvation. The sacraments give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to work redemptively in our lives by strengthening people's participation in the journey. "The Christian life unfolds as a journey initiated and sustained by the Spirit's operations."⁶⁶ Pentecostals would affirm the importance of personal and corporate faith in God as a prerequisite for the mediation of grace to come through the sacraments. Pentecostals would agree with Wesley that there is no inherent power in the sacraments in and of themselves.⁶⁷ That is, there is anticipation of encountering the Spirit of Christ in the sacrament. Through the sacraments, we encounter the real presence of Christ through the distinct operations of the Spirit, hence transforming us into the image and likeness of Christ.⁶⁸

Jesus is the Savior. He has ransomed us from the captivity of the kingdom of spiritual darkness and has reconciled us to God our Father (Mark 10:45; Col. 1:13; 1 Tim. 2:6). Jesus is our atoning sacrifice. Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12.2). When persons

⁶⁴ For the corresponding modes of grace attributed to the Holy Spirit, I am drawing on Dale Coulter, "The Unfolding Love of the Holy Spirit," Firebrand, accessed June 15, 2021, <https://firebrandmag.com/articles/the-unfolding-love-of-spirit-baptism>.

⁶⁵ For a more detailed explanation concerning sacramental ordinances and the Pentecostal way of salvation, see Kenneth J. Archer, "Nourishment for our Journey: The Pentecostal *Via Salutis* and Sacramental Ordinances," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13.1 (2004). This was reprinted in *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader*, ed. Chris E. W. Green (Leiden, Netherlands, and Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publications, 2016), 144-160.

⁶⁶ Dale Couter, "The Unfolding Love of the Holy Spirit," Firebrand, accessed June 15, 2021, <https://firebrandmag.com/articles/the-unfolding-love-of-spirit-baptism>.

⁶⁷ John Wesley, "The Means Of Grace" Sermon 16 – 1746 (1991), 157-171.

⁶⁸ For the following paragraphs concerning the Fivefold confession correlated with a sacrament, I am drawing heavily on my essay, Kenneth J. Archer, "Nourishment for our Journey: The Pentecostal *Via Salutis* and Sacramental Ordinances," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13.1 (2004), 79-96.

call upon the name of Jesus, repenting of sin and turning to God, they are saved. They experience justification, regeneration, adoption, and initial sanctification. They are born again and have the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹

The doxological confession that Jesus is Savior correlates with the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in both the individual and the community. The Holy Spirit works justifying and regenerating grace, signified in the sacrament of water baptism, which indicates that the candidate has been delivered from demonic forces and liberated from past sins. The power of sin is broken, yet the presence of sin still remains until glorification.

Water baptism affirms justifying grace. Justifying grace enables persons to be placed in a right relationship with God, resulting in the imputation and impartation of Christ's righteousness upon and into the Christian. Furthermore, it signifies that the person has been adopted into the family of God. The result is that the Christian in the community has assurance of salvation (Matt. 28:19-20 and 1 Pet. 3:21-22).

Jesus is the Sanctifier. As our High Priest, He continually intercedes on our behalf, praying for our growth in holiness (John 17). We understand that true holiness originates from the triune God's nature and is imparted to us as we share in God's divine life. This holiness is meant to transform every part of who we are, shaping all dimensions of our lives as we continue along the path of salvation (*via salutis*).⁷⁰

The doxological confession that Jesus is our Sanctifier aligns with the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work in both the individual and the community. The Spirit provides sanctifying grace, which is both instantaneous and progressive.

⁶⁹ Kenneth J. Archer, "Nourishment for our Journey", JPT 13:1, 90.

⁷⁰ Kenneth J. Archer, "Nourishment for our Journey", JPT 13:1, 91.

Foot washing is a sacramental practice through which believers continue to experience God's redeeming and sanctifying grace, cleansing, and healing (John 13). In the act of washing one another's feet, the community is reminded that, as we journey along the *via salutis*, we are affected by the world's brokenness and influences and may fall into sin. This sacrament points to God's ongoing provision for forgiveness, purification, and restoration, assuring us that He continues to cleanse us as we walk the path of salvation.

Jesus is the one who baptizes believers with the Holy Spirit. Before His ascension, He instructed His disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they received the Father's promised gift (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). Peter later declared that this promise was available to all who repent and place their faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38-39). John the Baptist had earlier foretold Jesus' ministry, affirming that He would baptize people with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8).

Jesus, the Spirit baptizer, correlates with charismatic grace being wrought by the Holy Spirit. This sacramental experience is a baptism into the love of God. It is essential for empowering the church as a Spirit-filled missionary community. Through the Holy Spirit's enabling presence, believers are gifted and equipped to proclaim the gospel in words and deeds, with signs and wonders often accompanying their witness (Acts 14:3; Heb. 2:4). As a charismatic community, they bear testimony together to God's redemptive work and His ongoing mission in the world.

This sacramental encounter often overflows into profound expressions of worship, including exuberant praise, glossolalic speech, and heartfelt compassion for those who are lost, suffering, or in need. Through these experiences, believers are drawn into a deeper and more intimate communion with the Holy Trinity. The sacrament of Spirit baptism is signified through tongues and tears. Spirit baptism as a baptism into the love of God gifts, equips and empowers

each person to participate fully and meaningfully in the life and mission of the charismatic Christian community.

Jesus is our Healer. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons, demonstrating the reality and power of the Kingdom of God through acts of restoration and wholeness (Acts 10:38). The Spirit provides healing grace. The sacrament of healing involves the laying on of hands and anointing with oil (Mark 6.13 and James 5). Oil, along with the laying on of hands, serves as the sacramental sign. Healing may be instantaneous, progressive, but ultimate healing is glorification. Praying for the sick should not be reduced to some instrumental means but instead be understood as a corporate experience of God's grace at work.

Jesus is our Soon-Coming King. Christians live in anticipation of Christ's return, when He will gather His redeemed people, His Bride, into the fullness of His eternal kingdom. The Spirit's mode of operation is glorifying grace. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper not only commemorates Christ's sacrificial death (1 Cor. 11:23-26) but also prophetically points forward to His promised return. It serves as a foretaste of the great eschatological banquet—the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Matt. 26:29)—when God's people will celebrate together in the complete fulfillment of their redemption. At that glorious feast, we will fully experience our identity and dignity as God's covenant people, redeemed by the Son and sustained by the work of the Holy Spirit, bringing glory to God.

The following chart illustrates the Full gospel as a framework.

Jesus the Savior	The Spirit's operation is justifying and regenerating grace.	Water Baptism, immersion preferred.
Jesus the Sanctifier	The Spirit's operation is sanctifying grace.	Foot washing, the towel, and the basin.
Jesus the Healer	The Spirit's operation is healing grace.	Praying for the sick, anointing with oil, and laying on of hands.
Jesus the Spirit Baptizer	The Spirit's operation of charismatic grace.	Tongues and tears.
Jesus, King soon returning	The Spirit's operation of glorifying grace.	The Eucharistic meal, wine and bread.

CONCLUSION

This paper argued for a Wesleyan-influenced Pentecostal spirituality capable of sustaining contemporary Global Pentecostalism as a grace-filled, lifelong journey with God and others. Although Pentecostalism has become a theologically diverse, multiethnic, and global movement, its historical roots remain deeply connected to the Wesleyan holiness tradition and its understanding of grace, sanctification, and Spirit-empowered Christian living. Pentecostal theology is centered on the redemptive activities of Jesus in tandem with the dynamic synergistic activity of the Holy Spirit, expressed through the full gospel confession of Jesus as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, Spirit-Baptizer, and Coming King. Correspondingly, the Holy Spirit's modes of grace are grounded in prevenient grace. The modes are regenerating, sanctifying, charismatic, healing, and glorifying grace.

Grace is relational, personal, unmerited and participatory: God initiates salvation through prevenient grace, enabling all persons to respond freely to God's love, while regenerating, sanctifying, and charismatic grace transform believers into holy, Spirit-filled disciples. A Pentecostal theology of grace that understands grace not merely as divine favor but as the active,

transformative presence of the Holy Spirit working within believers and the Christian community for the full restoration of the image of God in Christians. Salvation is therefore both instantaneous and progressive, involving the restoration of humanity and participation in God's redemptive mission in the world. Salvation is a synergistic journey in which divine grace empowers human cooperation without reducing salvation to human effort alone. Such an understanding of grace avoids work-righteousness, legalism, and antinomianism. Through worship, prayer, sacramental ordinances, repentance, spiritual disciplines, and Spirit-empowered mission, believers participate in the ongoing work of sanctifying and charismatic grace in perfecting us in holy love.