

UNIT 1: The Attributes of God

Section 20: God's Grace, Mercy, and Patience

Assigned Reading:
A. W. Pink – The Attributes of God
The Grace of God, The Mercy of God
The Patience of God

Introduction:

In understanding God's Goodness, we 1st examined God's Righteousness in particular and then what could be seen as out-workings of that Righteousness – God's Justice and Wrath. Over the past several weeks, we moved on to study God's love. Today we will begin to look at that love in action – God's Grace, Mercy, and Patience.

Q1: *What distinguishes Grace and Mercy? Are these two distinct concepts?*

Q2: *Are the OT and NT consistent in describing God as a God of grace, mercy and patience?*

Q3: *What is presupposed by Christianity in its preoccupation with Grace?*

Outline:

I. Defining Terms...

A. Grace

1. Heb. חַן – favor, grace, acceptance (with God or men) “found *favor* in the eyes of...”
 - a. **Gen.** 6:8; 18:3; 19:19; 30:27; 32:6; 33:8, 10, 15; 34:11; 39:4, 21; 47:25, 29; 50:4;
 - b. **Exod.** 3:21; 11:3; 12:36; 33:12f, 16f; 34:9; **Num.** 11:11, 15; 32:5; **Deut.** 24:1;
 - c. **Jdg.** 6:17; **Ruth** 2:2, 10, 13;
 - d. **1 Sam.** 1:18; 16:22; 20:3, 29; 25:8; 27:5; **2 Sam.** 14:22; 15:25; 16:4; **1 Ki.** 11:19;
 - e. **Est.** 2:15, 17; 5:2, 8; 7:3; 8:5;
 - f. **Ps.** 45:3; 84:12; **Prov.** 1:9; 3:4, 22, 34; 4:9; 5:19; 11:16; 13:15; 17:8; 22:1, 11; 28:23; 31:30;
 - g. **Ecc.** 9:11; 10:12; **Jer.** 31:2; **Nah.** 3:4; **Zech.** 4:7; 6:14; 12:10
2. Gr. χάρις – grace, kindness, mercy, goodwill, thanks, gratitude
 - a. **Lk.** 1:30; 2:40, 52; 4:22; 6:32ff; 17:9; **Jn.** 1:14, 16f;
 - b. **Acts** 2:47; 4:33; 6:8; 7:10, 46; 11:23; 13:43; 14:3, 26; 15:11, 40; 18:27; 20:24, 32; 24:27; 25:3, 9;
 - c. **Rom.** 1:5, 7; 3:24; 4:4, 16; 5:2, 15, 17, 20f; 6:1, 14f, 17; 7:25; 11:5f; 12:3, 6; 15:15; 16:20;
 - d. **1 Co.** 1:3f; 3:10; 10:30; 15:10, 57; 16:3, 23;
 - e. **2 Co.** 1:2, 12, 15; 2:14; 4:15; 6:1; 8:1, 4, 6f, 9, 16, 19; 9:8, 14f; 12:9; 13:13;
 - f. **Gal.** 1:3, 6, 15; 2:9, 21; 5:4; 6:18; **Eph.** 1:2, 6f; 2:5, 7f; 3:2, 7f; 4:7, 29; 6:24;
 - g. **Phil.** 1:2, 7; 4:23; **Col.** 1:2, 6; 3:16; 4:6, 18;
 - h. **1 Thess.** 1:1; 5:28; **2 Thess.** 1:2, 12; 2:16; 3:18;
 - i. **1 Tim.** 1:2, 12, 14; 6:21; **2 Tim.** 1:2f, 9; 2:1; 4:22; **Tit.** 1:4; 2:11; 3:7, 15; **Phlm.** 1:3, 25;
 - j. **Heb.** 2:9; 4:16; 10:29; 12:15, 28; 13:9, 25;
 - k. **Jas.** 4:6; **1 Pet.** 1:2, 10, 13; 2:19f; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12; **2 Pet.** 1:2; 3:18;
 - l. **2 Jn.** 1:3; **Jude** 1:4; **Rev.** 1:4; 22:21
3. *Theologian Definitions:*
 - a. “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense”
 - b. **Grudem**, “God’s grace means God’s goodness toward those who deserve only punishment.”

- c. **Erickson**, “God deals with his people not on the basis of their merit or worthiness, what they deserve, but simply according to their need; in other words, he deals with them on the basis of his goodness and generosity.”
- d. **Tozer**, “Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving.”
- e. **Packer**, “Far from being an impersonal force, a sort of celestial electricity received like a battery charge by ‘plugging in’ to the sacraments, is a personal activity—God operating in love toward people.”
- f. **Pink**, “Divine grace is the sovereign and saving favor of God exercised in the bestowment of blessings upon those who have no merit *in* them and for which no compensation is demanded *from* them.”
- g. **Grace** is God’s giving to those who are thoroughly ill-deserving and without merit. They have no claim to the benefits and it comes as pure charity, and is at first something that is unasked for and undesired.

B. Mercy

1. Heb. **חַנּוּן** – mercy, compassion
 - a. **Exod.** 33:19; **Deut.** 13:18; 30:3; **1 Ki.** 8:50; **2 Ki.** 13:23; **Ps.** 18:2; 102:14; 103:13; 116:5; **Prov.** 28:13;
 - b. **Isa.** 9:16; 14:1; 27:11; 30:18; 49:10, 13, 15; 54:8, 10; 55:7; 60:10;
 - c. **Jer** 6:23; 12:15; 13:14; 21:7; 30:18; 31:20; 33:26; 42:12; 50:42;
 - d. **Lam.** 3:32; **Ezek.** 39:25; **Hos.** 1:6f; 2:3, 6, 25; 14:4; **Mic.** 7:19; **Hab.** 3:2; **Zech.** 1:12; 10:6
2. Gr. **ἐλεος** – mercy, compassion & **ἐλέω** – to have mercy, compassion
 - a. **Matt.** 5:7; 9:13; 9:27; 12:7; 15:22; 17:15; 18:33; 20:30f; 23:23; **Mk.** 5:19; 10:47f;
 - b. **Lk.** 1:50, 54, 58, 72, 78; 10:37; 16:24; 17:13; 18:38f;
 - c. **Rom.** 9:15, 18; 9:23; 11:30ff; 11:31; 12:8; 15:9; **1 Co.** 7:25; **2 Co.** 4:1;
 - d. **Gal.** 6:16; **Eph.** 2:4; **Phil.** 2:27; **1 Tim.** 1:2, 13, 16; **2 Tim.** 1:2, 16, 18; **Tit.** 3:5;
 - e. **Heb.** 4:16; **Jas.** 2:13; 3:17; **1 Pet.** 1:3; 2:10; **2 Jn.** 1:3; **Jude** 1:2, 21
3. **ALSO** – **σπλαγχνίζομαι** – to be moved w/ pity or compassion...
 - a. *Used of Jesus’ and other’s compassion in the gospels...*
 - b. **Matt.** 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34; **Mk.** 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22; **Lk.** 7:13; 10:33; 15:20
 - c. **Matthew 9:35-38** Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.³⁶ Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.³⁷ Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.³⁸ "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."
4. *Theologian Definitions:*
 - a. **Grudem**, “God’s mercy means God’s goodness toward those in misery and distress.”
 - b. **Erickson**, “God’s mercy is his tenderhearted, loving compassion for His people. It is His tenderness of heart toward the needy. If grace contemplates humans as sinful, guilty, and condemned, mercy sees them as miserable and needy.”
 - c. **Tozer**, “Mercy is an attribute of God, an infinite and inexhaustible energy within the divine nature which disposes God to be actively compassionate.”
 - d. **Culver**, “[God] has shown [mercy] in His care for all His creatures (**Ps 145:15-16**), and in His allowing His enemies and blasphemers to live [patience], while helping all undeserving in one way or another (**Neh 9:17-21, 27-32**).”

- e. **Pink**, “God’s mercy denotes the ready inclination of God to relieve the misery of fallen creatures. Thus, “mercy” presupposes *sin*.”
 - (1) Pink explains that elect angels experience grace from God, but not mercy.
 - (2) Mercy is seen in general (in all Creation – **Ps 145:9**), in special ways (provision for men – **Matt 5:45**), and sovereign ways (reserved for the heirs of salvation).
 - (3) God never ceases from being merciful (**Ps 116:5**), but the exercise of His mercy is regulated by His sovereign will.
 - (4) One cannot “merit” mercy! This would be a contradiction of terms!
 - (5) **Titus 3:5** He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, - *works and mercy are in antithesis to each other!*

C. Patience

- 1. Heb. אַפַּיִם אֶרֶב – slow to anger
 - a. **Exod.** 34:6; **Num.** 14:18; **Neh.** 9:17;
 - b. **Ps.** 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; **Prov.** 14:29; 16:32; **Joel** 2:13; **Jon.** 4:2; **Nah.** 1:3
- 2. Gr. μακροθυμία – long-suffering, patience & μακροθυμέω – to be patient
 - a. **Matt.** 18:26, 29; **Lk.** 18:7; **Rom.** 2:4; 9:22; **1 Co.** 13:4; **2 Co.** 6:6;
 - b. **Gal.** 5:22; **Eph.** 4:2; **Col.** 1:11; 3:12; **1 Thess.** 5:14; **1 Tim.** 1:16; **2 Tim.** 3:10; 4:2;
 - c. **Heb.** 6:12; 6:15; **Jas.** 5:7f; 5:10; **1 Pet.** 3:20; **2 Pet.** 3:9, 15
- 3. *Theologian Definitions:*
 - a. **Grudem**, “God’s patience means God’s goodness in withholding of punishment toward those who sin over a period of time.”
 - b. **Erickson**, “God is pictured as withholding judgment and continuing to offer salvation and grace over long periods of time.”
 - c. **Pink**, “God’s longsuffering is mentioned in conjunction with His grace and mercy again and again, as may be seen by consulting **Ex 34:6, Num 14:18, Ps 86:15.**”

II. Discussing God’s Love In Action...

A. Is God Always the Same?

- 1. **John 1:17** For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.
 - a. This verse emphasizes the medium through which the Law and Grace have come... The Law through Moses, Grace through Jesus Christ.
 - b. Some, without relating this verse to the rest of scripture, have explained that Moses knew only law and Christ knows only grace.
 - c. From this, the OT is made out to be a book of law, while the NT is a book of grace.
 - d. **Marcion** contended that there were two different gods being presented in the two Testaments: the OT – God of creation and justice and the NT – God of love...
- 2. **Notice from our above scriptural survey** – It is not as though the concept of grace, mercy, and patience is merely a NT idea... Far from it!
- 3. **Tozer**, “We should banish from our minds forever the common but erroneous notion that justice and judgment characterize the God of Israel, while mercy and grace belong to the Lord of the Church. Actually there is in principle no difference between the OT and NT... Nothing that has occurred or will occur in heaven or earth or hell can change the tender mercies of our God... As judgment is God’s justice confronting moral inequity, so mercy is the goodness of God confronting human suffering and guilt. Were there no guilt

- in the world, no pain and no tears, God would yet be infinitely merciful; but His mercy might well remain hidden in His heart, unknown to the created universe.”
4. **Summary of Tozer:** While the law was given through Moses, it did not originate with Him. It had existed in the heart of God from before the foundation of the world. It became legal code for the nation of Israel on Mount Sinai; but the moral principles it embodies are eternal. Meanwhile, grace had always been the means of “sainthood” whether OT or NT. The only reason there can be a Hebrews 11 (the heroes of faith) is by God’s grace. Remember, Christ is the lamb slain before the foundation of the world (**Rev 13:8**) – the wondrous grace of God is eternal... *See also Paul’s discussion: **Rom 3 & 5**
 5. **Exodus 34:6** Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;
 6. **Ephesians 1:5-8** He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace⁸ which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight... **2:7-9** so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.
 7. **Titus 3:4-7** But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared,⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,⁷ so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

B. Distinguishing between Mercy, Grace, and Patience

1. Mercy and Grace

- a. Mercy and Grace while both applications of God’s goodness and love and therefore related, can be understood distinctly by contemplating how each applies to man...
- b. **Tozer**, “In God mercy and grace are one; but as they reach us they are seen as two, related but not identical. As mercy is God’s goodness confronting human misery and guilt, so grace is His goodness directed toward human debt and demerit. It is by His grace that God imputes merit where none previously existed and declares no debt to be where one had been before.”

2. Mercy and Patience

- a. **Pink**, “That the patience of God is really a display of His mercy, that it is indeed one way in which it is frequently manifested, cannot be denied. But that patience and mercy are one and the same excellency, and are not to be separated, we cannot concede...”
- b. **Charnock**, “[Patience] differs from mercy in the formal consideration of the object: mercy respects the creature as miserable, patience respects the creature as criminal; mercy pities him in his misery, and patience bears with the sin which engendered the misery, and is giving birth to more.”
- c. The Patience of God is chiefly in relationship to God Himself – a restraint placed upon His acts by His will... It is the excellency by which He sustains a creature without immediately avenging Himself.

- d. The wicked respond to this longsuffering with sinning all the more, but the righteous adore the Lord for His wondrous patience... The saved remember that they too once used to be under the wrath of God... so grateful for His patience with us!

C. Really Understanding Grace – J.I. Packer

1. Many church goers pay lip service to grace (speak of it, sing of it, pray about it) but their understanding of it is vague if not nonexistent...
2. Meanwhile, this is surely one of the most fundamental concepts of Christianity!
3. **Four crucial truths** which the doctrine of grace presupposes:
 - (1) The moral depravity of man
 - Man is thoroughly self-congratulatory and attempts to ease his own conscience and the consciences of others...
 - Man treats small virtues as compensating for great vices and refuses to take seriously the idea that, morally speaking, there is anything much wrong with him. He believes himself to be a “good guy.”
 - Man dismisses a bad conscience as an unhealthy psychosis or mental aberration rather than an insight into moral reality!
 - The thought of being a creature fallen from God’s image, rebels against God’s rule, guilty and unclean in God’s sight, fit only for God condemnation, never enters his mind!
 - (2) The coming wrath of a just God
 - Many of our day seem to close their eyes and pretend that evil can be ignored
 - We see this even in politics of our day... a sort of “leave it alone” policy is prevalent in much of the world... punishment is only enacted as a last resort, and then only so far as is necessary to prevent evil from having too grievous social consequences...
 - God the Judge of all the earth, will vindicate the innocent (if such there be) and punish lawbreakers. God is not true to Himself unless He punishes sin.
 - Without the knowledge of this truth, that wrongdoers have no natural hope of anything from God but judgment, can never share biblical faith in divine grace
 - (3) The spiritual powerlessness of man
 - Many function in relationships by “putting the other person in a position where he/she cannot decently say no.”
 - Using this principle, many throughout history have believed they can relate to God in this way... repairing their relationship with God by putting God in a position where He cannot say no anymore.
 - Ancient pagans thought to do this by multiplying gifts and sacrifices; modern pagans seek to do it by church-attendance and morality. Conceding they are not perfect, they still have no doubt that respectability henceforth will guarantee God’s acceptance of them in the end, whatever they may have done in the past.
 - **Rom 3:20** “No one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law.” – regaining God’s favor is beyond our power! We must admit inability!
 - To the self-righteous Jew the gospel was a “stumbling block” and to the conceited Greek it was “foolishness” (**I Cor 1:23**) – nothing in it leaves pride for man! Man’s state is desperate, helpless, hopeless w/o Christ!
 - **G.S. Bishop**, “Grace is a provision for men who are so fallen that they cannot lift the axe of justice, so corrupt that they cannot change their own natures, so averse to God that they cannot turn to Him, so blind that they cannot see Him,

so deaf that they cannot hear Him, and so dead that He Himself must open their graves and lift them into resurrection.”

(4) The sovereign freedom of God

- Ancient paganism thought of each god as bound to his worshippers by bonds of self-interest, because he depended on their service and gifts for his welfare.
- Modern paganism has at the back of its mind a similar feeling that God is somehow obliged to love and help us, little though we deserve it.
- But the God of the Bible does not depend on his human creatures for His well-being (**Ps 50:8-13, Acts 17:25**), nor, now that we have sinned, is he bound to show us favor.
- Grace is free, in the sense of being self-originated and of proceeding from One who was free not to be gracious.
- **Romans 9:16** So then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.
- **There is hardly any doctrine that makes a “natural man”** more upset than the biblical doctrine of sovereign grace. To say that God is free and sovereign to exercise grace, mercy, and patience as He deems upsets the carnal man!
- **Pink**, “That God should have formed His purpose from everlasting, without in anywise consulting the creature, is too abasing for the unbroken heart. That grace cannot be earned or won by any efforts of man is too self-emptying for self-righteousness. And that grace singles out whom it pleases to be its favored objects arouses hot protests from haughty rebels. The clay rises up against the Potter and asks, “Why hast Thou made me thus?” A lawless insurrectionist dares to call into question the justice of Divine sovereignty.”

4. **Grace is:**

a. The pardon from sin

- (1) Those w/o salvation are condemned criminals awaiting a terrible sentence...
- (2) The saved, have received a full-pardon and are awaiting a fabulous inheritance
- (3) **John 3:17-18** "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

b. The motive of the plan of Salvation

- (1) God's grace began with election before the world was and will be completed only when the church is perfect in glory!
- (2) So we believers may rejoice to know that our conversion was no accident, but an act of God which had its place in an eternal plan to bless us with the free gift of salvation from sin (**Eph 1&2**)

c. The guarantee of the preservation of the Saints

- (1) The Christian's future is assured!
- (2) **1 Peter 1:3-5** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

(3) **Philippians 1:6** *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

5. Is God's justice impugned by his choice that only some receive His grace? NO... The amazing thing is that any are saved at all! If God gave to all what was deserved, none would be saved!
6. Does Free Grace encourage "moral laxity" (final salvation is certain, so it doesn't matter how we behave or live, for we are saved anyway)...
 - a. The Doctrine of Salvation is Grace, The Ethics of Salvation is Gratitude
 - b. Those who have received grace give themselves henceforth to "good works" – **Eph 2:8-10, Titus 2:11-12**. Gratitude will move anyone who has truly received grace to do as God requires... they desire to please the Lord from the heart!