

The Strange and Wonderful Attributes of God

Lesson # 18 – God’s Mercy & Grace²³¹⁸

In this lesson, we are combining Mercy and Grace into one lesson. These two attributes of God are so closely related that they have a tremendous overlap.

I. Definition of God’s Mercy & Grace

Mercy is – 1. Kind and compassionate treatment of an offender, enemy, prisoner, or other person under one’s power; clemency. From *The American Heritage Dictionary*; New College Edition – 1978.

In its Greek usage – verb - ἐλεεω, eleeō (Strong’s #1653) 28X noun form 27X; meaning the emotional response and consequent action to another’s suffering or affliction.

Grace - Often defined as “**unmerited favor**” of God toward sinful men.

Grace is – 4. b. Mercy, clemency. - - - 7. c. An excellence or power granted by God; an unmerited gift from God. From *The American Heritage Dictionary*; New College Edition – 1978

One might conclude that according to these definitions, mercy and Grace are acts of God, not Attributes of God. Grace has many different meanings in the English Dictionaries.

In its Greek usage – noun - χαρις, caris; (Strong’s #5485) 155X has a number of different meanings. Our focus in this lesson is on Grace (and mercy) used as attributes inherent in God’s character.

In terms of God’s character, through Scripture, we see that God is merciful and gracious. These along with His patience constitute elements of His goodness.

Categorical Discussions:

Is this an Existential or a Relational Category? These are both **relational categories**. Before the creation of the angels or of the universe, they didn’t have much practical meaning. They existed in the being of God, but were not expressed toward anyone who needed them.

Is this an Incommunicable or a Communicable Category? These are both **communicable attributes** of God. We are called to be both merciful and gracious to others. In expressing in our lives these attributes of God we become more Christ-like. These are important attributes that we need to seek for our own lives as an expression of our love for Christ and as being adopted into the household of God as His children!

Problem Statement: In general, the Mercy and Grace of God are well understood and taught within American Evangelicalism. Within a broad legalism and legalistic instinct, there is always some instinct to reject or to minimize these great attributes of our God.

I would like to blame this instinct to minimize these attributes to our Arminian brothers and sisters who strictly speaking do not hold to the doctrine of the “perseverance of the saints.” In such a doctrinal schema, the idea that saints can lose their salvation, implies some weakness in God’s perfection regarding His gracious mercy to those whom He has adopted into His family through the power of the Holy Spirit and the perfection of the atonement that has been performed by Jesus the Christ.

II. Logic and Importance of God’s Mercy & Grace

Gods’ grace (a thing, a noun) is the action of having mercy (noun) and acting merciful (an action, a verb) to alleviate suffering and insufficiency toward those beings whom He favors, and on whom He has set His complete love upon.

How does God give Grace to we saints? The steps of grace regarding our salvation are many. They are:

1. **God remembers that we are but “dust”**, weak, susceptible to the flesh, unable in our natural state to worship, love, or praise our Creator.

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2. God emotionally has **pity on mankind** which is expressed in the act of showing mercy towards His beloved (elect saints: OT fathers, OT Israel, NT Saints; NT-Church, Tribulation Saints, and Millennial Kingdom Saints).
3. **God's choosing** who would be "elect" according to the His own will. "*He **chose** us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love, according to the kind intention of **His will**" (Eph 1:4-7) and "*In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined** according to **His purpose** who works all things after **the counsel of His will**," (Eph 1:11)**
4. The Son gave Himself in the **Incarnation** and in **death on the cross** for our salvation with the Father's concurrence and expectation.
5. The Church and Scripture were established to provide the "**universal call**" to all sinners.
6. The Holy Spirit providing the "**Effectual call**" to the elect (chosen by God) sinners.
Note: The church is responsible for the "**General**" / Universal call to all sinners.
7. The Holy Spirit's work of **regeneration** in and to the heart of God's elect dead sinners.
8. The **giving** to those who have been regenerated, a **faith** in the effectual blood atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.
9. The declaration of our **redemption**, having been **justified**.
Titus 3:7 *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**, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, **so that being justified by His grace** we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*
10. God has **forgiven** all of our sins. We are not yet sinless in this life, but we have been declared sinless by God and before God, **being "In Christ," robed in His Righteousness!**
11. God has **sanctified** us (**positionally set aside**) and also is sanctifying us (**practically set aside**).
12. God has **preserved** us for His own purpose and for His own glory.
13. God **has glorified us** and **will glorify us** for His own purpose and glory.

Consequences of God's Mercy & Grace We are incredibly loved by the faithful, all wise, all knowing, sovereign, and immutable God. What is there to fear? Only that our faith be strong, our knowledge of God be thorough, and our exercise of love be confident and certain, and that we be faithful to Him!

Historicity of God's Mercy & Grace God's grace was well understood by the 1st century apostles and their disciples. The church has occasionally lost its clear understanding of God's mercy and Grace.

III. Scriptural Basis of God's Mercy & Grace

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures are quoted from the New American Standard Updated version (NASU) Some verses pertinent to this goal of knowing of God's Mercy and Grace:

John 1:14-18 *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, **full of grace and truth**.¹⁵ John (the Baptist) testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" (Jn 1:30) ¹⁶For of His fullness we have all received, and **grace upon grace**.¹⁷For the Law was given through Moses; **grace and truth** were realized through Jesus Christ.*

Rom 3:21-26 *But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,²² even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ** for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ **being justified as a gift by His grace** through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;²⁵ whom God displayed publicly **as a propitiation in His blood through faith**. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;²⁶ for the*

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demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Rom 5:1-5 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Eph 2:4-9 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Titus 3:5-7 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, ⁶whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Heb 4:14-16 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

1 Peter 5:6-11 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. ⁸Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. ¹⁰After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. ¹¹To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

IV. Important Points About God's Mercy & Grace

1st How God's Mercy & Grace Relates to Other Attributes

God's Grace relates to His Love, His Sovereignty, His Immutability, and His Providence.

2nd Why God's Mercy & Grace is Important to Our Faith

The heart of our gospel is the pity God has on us, and the mercy that He feels for us, and the Grace that He **sovereignly** directs toward His elect.

3rd Confessions or Creeds that Address God's Mercy & Grace

The 1689 London Baptist Confession; Chapter 3, Article 3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice. (1 Timothy 5:21; Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:5, 6; Romans 9:22, 23; Jude 4)

4th Errors/Heresies that Deny God's Mercy & Grace

Liberal theology teaches a self-righteousness form of the atonement. Some modern Arminians teach a theology of self-righteousness and as a result border on serious heresy!

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Important Quotes About God's Mercy & Grace

The Arminian presupposition of a free will weakens the Bible's doctrine of grace to the same degree that it weakens the doctrine of omnipotence. When the Arminian insists that somehow God limits himself at the door of the human will, this can only mean in practice that the sinner must supply something for salvation that God is powerless to supply. That something is the act of saving faith, essentially an autonomous manifestation of a purely natural, innate spiritual competence. In other words, salvation is partly a transcendent act of God's mercy in providing the necessary circumstances and partly an immanent natural achievement of the sinner's spiritual competence.

R. K. McGregor Wright; *Whatever Happened to the Reformation;* p. 9

If our religion be of our own getting or making, it will perish; and the sooner it goes, the better; but if our religion is a matter of God's giving, we know that He shall never take back what He gives, and that, if He has commenced to work in us by His grace, He will never leave it unfinished.

Charles Spurgeon; sermon *Needless Fears;*

Before this period [when I came to prize the Bible alone as my standard of judgment] I had been much opposed to the doctrines of election, particular redemption (i. e. limited atonement) and final preserving grace. But now I was brought to examine these precious truths by the Word of God. Being made willing to have no glory of my own in the conversion of sinners, but to consider myself merely an instrument; and being made willing to receive what the Scriptures said, I went to the Word, reading the New Testament from the beginning, with particular reference to these truths. To my great astonishment I found that the passages which speak decidedly for election and preserving grace, were about four times as many as those which speak apparently against these truths; and even those few, shortly after, when I had examined and understood them, served to confirm me in the above doctrines. As to the effect which my belief in these doctrines had on me, I am constrained to state for God's glory, that though I am still exceedingly weak, and by no means so dead to the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, as I might be, and as I ought to be, yet, by the grace of God, I have walked more closely with Him since that period. My life has not been so variable, as I may say that I have lived much more for God than before.

George Mueller; *Autobiography*

(Rick) Warren then goes to the unbiblical notion of "wooing". God does not "woo" people; He commands them to repent, and through effectual grace He regenerates them. Warren portrays the sinner as the decisive role. According to this theology, God wishes He could have a people, but has to woo them, hoping some will decide He is worthy to be served. Though this approach is very popular, it is not biblical. The theology of "wooing" is why people try to "dress up" God to make Him look more attractive to sinners, hoping they will "make a decision". The fact is that sinners hate God and will never respond to wooing unless God first graciously changes their hearts. **Bob DeWaay;** *Redefining Christianity;* p. 102

Isa 55:8-9 *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.
9For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.*

Rom 9:22-24 *What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.*