



attributes of *God*

WEEK 18 — GOD'S GRACE



God's saving grace has always only flowed through Jesus Christ, from eternity past to the fall, to Noah, to you and me and to eternity future.

2 TIMOTHY 1 : 9

Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling,
not according to our works, but according to His own purpose
and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity

DEFINITIONS / THOUGHTS OF GOD'S GRACE

Two common definitions:

God's Riches At Christ's Expense

God's unmerited favor

Some thoughts from John M. Frame in *The Doctrine of God*:

- *Grace in scripture refers to God's benevolence, as do goodness and love, but with different perspectives and nuances. (flows from God's goodness as does mercy and love) So all the blessings of God come to us by God's sovereign grace. Without His grace, we are nothing. By grace comes the forgiveness of our sins, the power to do good works, and the ability to serve the people of God.*
- *When God shows favor, since man is fallen and cursed, any favor shown by God to man is surprising.*
- *God's grace to men, then, appears in spite of man's unrighteousness, and by God's utterly sovereign decision ("I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy"). It is legitimate, therefore...to define God's grace theologically as "sovereign, unmerited favor, given to those who deserve his wrath."*
- *"We can also see from these references that God's grace, like his love, is covenantal. It is implicit in the covenant name of God. Yahweh initiates the covenant by choosing undeserving people to bear his name: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Israel as a nation. That is grace.*
- *Grace, therefore, is utterly personal. It is the Lord's own attitude of favor towards his people.*

Arthur W. Pink in *The Attributes of God*:

- *Grace is the sole source from which flows the goodwill, love and salvation of God unto his chosen people.*
- *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.*
- *Grace can neither be bought, earned, nor won by the creature. If it could be, it would cease to be grace.*

A.W. Tozier in *The Attributes of God*:

- *"Grace flows from God's goodness. Mercy, however, is God's goodness confronting human guilt, whereas grace is God's goodness confronting human demerit. ...the goodness of God yearns to bestow blessedness even to those who do not deserve it, but who have a specific demerit, and that blessedness is grace. Grace is that which brings into favor one justly in disfavor."*

G.S. Bishop (in *The Attributes of God* by Arthur Pink):

- *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 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.*

God's attribute of always being disposed to and leaning towards blessing and kindness, not because it is deserved or earned, but because it is God just being God.

GOD'S GRACE TO HIS PEOPLE IN SCRIPTURE

NOAH - Genesis 6:5,8 - Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

JACOB - Romans 9:11-12 - ...for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,¹² it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."

MOSES - Exodus 33:17-19 - ¹⁷ The Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name." ¹⁸ Then ^[b]Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" ¹⁹ And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

Exodus 34:6-7 - 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 ^[a]truth; ⁷ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

Numbers 6:23-27 – Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²³ "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them: ²⁴ The Lord bless you, and keep you; ²⁵ The Lord make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; ²⁶ The Lord lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.' ²⁷ So they shall ^[i]invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I *then* will bless them."

Isaiah 30:18-19- Therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him. ¹⁹ ^[v]O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you.

Psalms 119:58 - I sought Your favor with all *my* heart; Be gracious to me according to Your word.

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

Acts 4:33 - ³³ And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

Acts 11:21-23 - ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. ²² The ^[v]news about them ^[w]reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off ^[x]to Antioch. ²³ Then when he arrived and ^[y]witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with ^[z]resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord;

Acts 13:43 - Now when *the meeting* of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing ^[y]proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God. (the Grace of God referring to the gospel)

Romans 3:21-24 - But now apart ^[a]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 ^[b]who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all ^[c]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;

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For by grace you have been saved through faith; and ^[a]that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Romans 12:4-6 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly.*

2 Corinthians 12:9 - And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast ^[a]about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me

2 Corinthians 8:9 - For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

COMMON GRACE: Another Aspect of God’s Grace

John Murray: “Every favor of whatever kind of degree, falling short of salvation, which this undeserving and sin-cursed world enjoys at the hand of God.”

God gives temporal blessings to all

The sovereign grace (kindness, gifts, blessings) of God bestowed upon all of mankind, saved and unsaved alike. This grace is distinct from the saving grace of God which is only for His elect.

God is good to all of us in his general provision

Psalm 145:8-9 - The Lord is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. The Lord is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.

Matthew 5:44-45 - ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may ^[a]be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

Blessings – rain, sunshine, food (Psalms 65:5-13; 104; 136:25; 145:9; 15-16)

Civil Government (Rom 13:4) for our good

God’s favor to the unredeemed is real, but not forever. He is showing his kindness today as he restrains evil and judgment, but as it says in Ex 34:6-7, the guilty will not go unpunished.

God restrains sin

Genesis 11:6 where God confuses languages to prevent the power of evil to be congregated.

2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 - And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way
 Romans 1:28 And just as they did not see fit ^[a] to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

God restrains wrath (his patience)

Genesis 3:15 - And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

2 Peter 3:9 - God waits for many to repent and believe – “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

Unregenerate people do good

(Not good in the “higher sense,” of good works done for the glory of God, obedient to the word of God, motivated by faith and love for God)

Luke 6:33 - ³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same.

COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTE

One way to think about how you are gracious to others is the extent that you extend favor, kindness, blessing, mercy, forgiveness, love, gifts, etc. to others when they have done nothing to deserve them and in fact may have wronged you, hurt you, offended you, treated you badly, slandered you, rebelled against you and are deserving of some retribution or punishment.

Words

Colossians 4:6 - Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Ephesians 4:29 - Let no ^[a]unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification ^[b]according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Needs of others

1 Peter 4:10 - As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

Matthew 25:34-36 - “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’

Forgiveness

Colossians 3:12-13 - So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and ^[k]patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Hebrews 12:14-15 - Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

Love your enemies

Matthew 5: 44-47 - But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than* others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

CLOSING THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

A.W. Tozer says, *“There are two ways to think about the grace of God: One is to look at yourself and see how sinful you were and say, God’s grace must be vast—it must be huge as space to forgive such a sinner as I am.” That’s one way and that’s a good way--and probably that’s the most popular way. But there’s another way to think of the grace of God. Think of it as the way God is—God being like God. And when God shows grace to a sinner He isn’t being dramatic, He’s acting like God. He’ll never act any other way but like God.”*

J.I. Packer says many church people don’t actually believe in the grace of God.

He says there are **four crucial truths in the realm which the doctrine of grace presupposes, and if they are not acknowledged and felt in one’s heart, clear faith in God’s grace becomes impossible.**

The moral ill-desert of man - The thought of themselves as creatures fallen from God’s image, rebels against God’s rule, guilty and unclean in God’s sight, fit only for God’s condemnation, never enters their heads.

The retribute justice of God – God is not true to Himself unless He punishes sin. And unless one knows and feels the truth of this fact, that wrongdoers have no natural hope of anything from God but retributive judgment, one can never share the biblical faith in divine grace.

The spiritual impotence of man – Many have believed we can repair our relationship with God. To mend our relationship with God, regaining God’s favor after having lost it, is beyond the power of any of us. We must see this and bow to it before we can share biblical faith in God’s grace.

The sovereign freedom of God – The God of the bible does not depend on his human creatures for his well-being, nor, now that we have sinned, is he bound to show us favor. We can only claim from Him justice, and justice, for us, means certain condemnation. Only when it is seen that what decides each individual’s destiny is whether or not God resolves to save him from His sins, and that this is a decision which God need not make in any single case, can one begin to grasp the biblical view of Grace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Has tonight's look at God's attribute of Graciousness caused you to think differently about God's grace? How so and why?
2. It has been said that we cannot be truly gracious (give grace to others) until we have truly realized the extent of God's graciousness, His saving grace, to us personally. In light of that:
 - a. How have you (or have you) experienced/received the grace of God in your life?
 - b. Do you truly understand the grace of God that has come to you, is in you, and should flow through you?
 - c. How would you communicate this to someone else and how does this change you?
3. Since grace is a communicable attribute, are you gracious? How do you demonstrate this attribute in your life to others? Give examples. If you struggle to extend grace to others, what may be some reasons why? Be specific.

