

- I. Session 49: The Grace of God Part 1: Old Testament
- a. Purpose: In this session we shall explore the attribute of the grace of God as it is taught in the Old Testament.
  - b. What is the grace of God?
    - i. The words in the Old Testament
      1. Verb is *hanan*, noun is *hen*.
      2. “As for hanan, it depicts a heartfelt response by someone who has something to give to someone who has something to give to someone in need.”<sup>1</sup>
    - ii. Summarizing definition:
      1. John Frame: “Grace in Scripture refers to God’s benevolence.”<sup>2</sup>
      2. John Feinberg: “As for the concept of grace, it is best understood as unmerited favor. That means that something good happens to you even though you have done nothing to merit or earn it”<sup>3</sup>
      3. That is, when we talk about God’s grace we are talking about God as one who gives favor even when people do not deserve it.
  - c. What does the Bible teaches about the grace of God in the Old Testament?
    - i. Why do we want to focus on the Old Testament’s teaching of the Grace of God:
      1. People often think that the Old Testament is all about Law, wrath and the anger of God to the lack of God’s grace. Some today even think that the God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament.
      2. This however is not true and we want to see that even in the Old Testament God is also a God of Grace.
    - ii. The word *hen* in the Old Testament shows the idea of unmerited favor
      1. Prior to Noah’s flood note what God sees in all of humanity: “*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.*” (**Genesis 6:5**)
        - a. Note “*every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*”
        - b. This must have included Noah too who is also a sinner. Don’t forget Noah was far from perfect as events after the Flood indicates.
      2. Due to man’s sin God plans to bring out judgment against His creation (**Genesis 6:7**)
      3. Then we read these astounding words: “*But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.*” (**Genesis 6:8**)
        - a. The word “*favor*” is Grace.

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<sup>1</sup> John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 353.

<sup>2</sup> John Frame, *Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 424.

<sup>3</sup> John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 354.

- b. Favor is shown towards Noah even though he too was a sinner.
    - c. While the next verse mentions that Noah was blameless for his time we must not forget that **Hebrews 11:7** teaches that Noah became an heir of righteousness through faith.
- iii. Grace is explicitly described as an attribute of God in the Old Testament
  1. *“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;” (Exodus 34:6)*
    - a. In context this is God re-giving the Ten Commandments and earlier the people have sinned against God and Moses broke the two tablets.
    - b. Now Moses was going back up to Mount Sinai for the second issuing of the Decalogue.
    - c. Here in this context we see the mention of God’s attributes include that God is “gracious.”
  2. *“He has made His wonders to be remembered; The Lord is gracious and compassionate” (Psalm 111:4)*
    - a. This is another example where God is explicitly called “gracious.”
    - b. How has God shown Himself to be gracious?
      - i. The next verse says “He has given food to those who fear Him;” (Psalm 111:5a)
      - ii. The next verse also says “He will remember His covenant forever.” (Psalm 111:5b)
      - iii. Also for the Jews, God’s grace is shown “In giving them the heritage of the nations.” (Psalm 111:6b)
  3. *“The Lord is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.” (Psalm 145:8)*
    - a. Echoes **Exodus 34:6** with the same mention of God’s attributes.
    - b. This is a Psalm that focuses on praising God.
    - c. Note it mentions that God is gracious.
    - d. **Verse 10** shows us the implication of knowing this truth: “All Your works shall give thanks to You, O Lord, And Your godly ones shall bless You.” □ We should worship Him!
  4. *“He prayed to the Lord and said, “Please Lord, was not this [a]what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore [b]in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.” (Jonah 4:2)*

- a. Like **Psalm 145:8** this verse echoes **Exodus 34:6** with the same mention of certain attributes of God.
  - b. This include the confession that God is “*gracious.*”
  - c. However unlike the other instances here the context it is Jonah complaining to God for showing His grace to others, particularly the Assyrians whom he considered his enemies!
  - d. But this ought not to be! We must be gracious if God is gracious with us!
- iv. The Grace of God is shown in the forgiveness of sins
1. *“They refused to listen, And did not remember Your wondrous deeds which You had performed among them; So they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their slavery [a]in Egypt. But You are a God of forgiveness, Gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness; And You did not forsake them.” (Nehemiah 9:17)*
    - a. In context this takes place in post-Exilic Israel in which the returning exiles assembled to publically confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors.
    - b. Here some of the Levites were blessing the people with a public speech.
    - c. Note the confession of sins in the first half of the verse.
    - d. Note the second half provides the contrast of how God is like which include the truth that God is “*Gracious*”
    - e. Because God is gracious in His attributes the Levites can say “*You are a God of forgiveness*”
  2. *“And rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil.” (Joel 2:13)*
    - a. The book of Joel focuses a lot of the Day of the Lord that will display the wrath of God, which is partly described in **Joel 2** from **verses 1-11**.
    - b. The wrath of God is so bad that **verse 11** ends with the question: “*And who can endure it?*”
    - c. Then in **verse 12** the focuses change to the topic of repentance.
    - d. Verse 13 gives the answer for why we can repent, namely it rest on the attributes of God as the motivation for repentance!
    - e. Among the attributes mentioned is the fact that “*He is gracious*”
- d. Implications
- i. Does this truth cause you to worship God for being gracious?

- ii. Do you read the Old Testament with more trust in God, knowing that even in the Old Testament He is the same gracious God that we can trust?
- iii. Do you sing to God about His grace? Remember the verse we seen earlier in the Psalms, and Psalms are originally songs of worship!
- iv. If God is gracious we must also be gracious!
- v. Let God's graciousness be the motivation for you to repent from your sins and live the Christian life!
- vi. Make sure also as well that you are not jealous of others when God shows grace to people—even those we deem as our enemies!