

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 16, Communicable Attributes, Part 3, Gracious & Merciful

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 16, Communicable Attributes, Part 3, Gracious & Merciful, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert Peterson's Theology Proper, Session 16, focuses on the communicable attributes of God, specifically grace and mercy. Grace is defined as God's undeserved favor and compassion, while mercy involves God seeing and relieving affliction. These attributes are closely linked with God's love and are evident throughout the Old and New Testaments. The session explores how grace is manifested in salvation, the Christian life, and even in the Trinity. Similarly, the discussion of mercy highlights God's compassion, his withholding of deserved judgment, and its impact on believers, urging them to show mercy to others. Ultimately, both grace and mercy are presented as fundamental aspects of God's character, impacting humanity in the past, present, and future.

2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 16 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Theology Proper: God).



**Peterson_TheoProp
er_Session 16.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 16, Communicable Attributes, Part 3, Gracious & Merciful

Briefing Document: The Communicable Attributes of God - Grace and Mercy

Overview:

This document summarizes the key themes and ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 16 of his "Theology Proper" series, focusing on the communicable attributes of God: grace and mercy. Peterson emphasizes that while these attributes have nuanced meanings, they significantly overlap with God's love, goodness, and generosity, often functioning as intensifiers rather than sharply distinct concepts in Scripture. He explores the biblical definitions, manifestations, and implications of God's grace and mercy throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. The Interconnectedness of God's Loving Attributes:

- Peterson establishes that grace and mercy are closely linked with other attributes like love, goodness, and generosity. He notes that biblical texts often use these terms together for emphasis rather than strict differentiation.
- He observes that while standard definitions might suggest distinct meanings (e.g., mercy as withholding judgment), scriptural usage often treats them synonymously, especially in the Old Testament.
- **Quote:** "God's love, grace, and mercy are often linked and treated almost synonymously."
- **Quote:** "Paul reminds me of the Old Testament, where words are piled up for emphasis rather than for sharp distinctions. I'm not saying they're identical these terms, but there's a great overlap between God's love, grace, mercy, goodness, and generosity."
- Examples from Ephesians 2:4-10 and Titus 3:3-8 are cited to illustrate this convergence of attributes.

2. God's Grace: Undeserved Favor and Power:

- **Definition:** Peterson defines grace as God's "deep compassion for all, especially his own people, and gives them undeserved favor, and thus the opposite of what they deserve." This includes the gift of knowing Him and eternal life.
- **Old Testament Manifestations:** Exodus 34:6 ("the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God") is identified as a definitive passage defining God's character. The imagery of God as a father to orphans and widows (Psalm 68:5), a husband to an unfaithful spouse (Hosea 3:1), and a loving parent (Hosea 11) illustrates God's gracious nature.
- **Quote (Hosea 11:4):** "I led them with cords of kindness, with bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws. And I bent down to them and fed them." Peterson highlights that the concept of grace is evident even when the specific word isn't used.
- **Grace in the Trinity:** Peterson emphasizes that grace characterizes all three persons of the Trinity: the Father is the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10), the Son is full of grace and truth (John 1:14), and the Spirit is the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29).
- **Jesus and Grace:** The life of Jesus is presented as a manifestation of God's grace, from God's favor upon him as a boy (Luke 2:40) to his humility in becoming human (2 Corinthians 8:9) and his making atonement by God's grace (Hebrews 2:9). Salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is through the grace of the Lord Jesus (Acts 15:14).
- **Grace and Salvation:** The gospel message is described as "the gospel of God's grace" (Acts 20:24), "the message of his grace" (Acts 14:3), and "the word of his grace" (Acts 20:32). Salvation is viewed as a product of God's grace, encompassing new birth, calling, justification, and forgiveness.
- **Enabling Grace:** Peterson distinguishes between initial saving grace and enabling grace, which is God's power to live the Christian life.
- **Quote:** "Saving grace is his love when we deserve his wrath. Enabling grace is not just saving grace. It is the grace that enables God's people to live for him."
- Examples include Paul's recognition that God's grace made him who he was and enabled his hard work (1 Corinthians 15:10) and God's assurance that His grace is sufficient in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

- **Future Grace:** Believers are to set their hope fully on the grace that will be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13). This future outpouring of grace is immense and should shape believers' present lives.
- **Reflection in Believers' Lives:** God's grace should be reflected in believers' gracious words that build others up (Ephesians 4:29-32) and in their willingness to forgive others as God in Christ has forgiven them (Ephesians 4:32).

3. God's Mercy: Compassionate Relief from Affliction:

- **Definition:** Peterson defines mercy as God seeing "our affliction and moves to relieve it." He argues that this is the more common meaning in Scripture compared to simply withholding deserved judgment.
- **Overlap with Other Attributes:** Mercy is presented as an expression of God's love and goodness, particularly when He observes misery.
- **Old Testament Examples:** God's mercy is evident in His seeing the affliction of His people in Egypt and rescuing them (Exodus 3:7). The image of God as a husband in Hosea is again used to illustrate His merciful love and restoration of His unfaithful people.
- **Withholding Judgment:** While less common as the primary definition, Peterson acknowledges that mercy sometimes involves God not dealing with people as their sins deserve (Psalm 103:10).
- **Mercy and Repentance:** God's mercy can be a motive for repentance (Joel 2:13), and sometimes mercy is shown upon repentance (Deuteronomy 13:17).
- **New Testament Emphasis:** God's mercy overflows in the New Testament, particularly through Jesus Christ. Jesus showed compassion for the distressed crowds (Matthew 9:36) and repeatedly healed the afflicted, including the blind and demon-possessed, often in response to their cries for mercy as the "Son of David."
- **Mercy and Salvation:** God's mercy is central to salvation. Paul quotes Exodus 33:19 in Romans 9 to emphasize that salvation "does not depend on human will or effort, but on God who shows mercy" (Romans 9:16). Believers are described as "objects of mercy" prepared beforehand for glory (Romans 9:23-24).
- **Mercy in Conjunction with Love and Grace:** Ephesians 2:4-5 highlights God's rich mercy alongside His great love and grace in making believers alive in Christ.

- **Mercy Excludes Human Effort:** Titus 3:5 reiterates that salvation comes "not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy."
- **Mercy Elicits Praise:** Believers praise God for His great mercy, which caused them to be born again to a living hope (1 Peter 1:3-4).
- **Mercy Towards Others:** Because believers have received God's mercy and continually need it, they are called to freely and generously show mercy to others (Matthew 6:9-13, Matthew 18:21-35, Ephesians 4:32). Jesus himself states, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

Future Topics:

Peterson indicates that subsequent sessions will cover God's goodness (or generosity), patience (or longsuffering), and glory, concluding the study of God's communicable attributes before moving on to His works.

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson's lecture provides a comprehensive overview of God's grace and mercy, emphasizing their profound interconnectedness with His other loving attributes. He highlights the scriptural evidence for God's undeserved favor and compassionate action throughout history, culminating in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The lecture underscores that God's grace is not only the foundation of salvation but also the enabling power for Christian living and the future hope of believers. Similarly, God's mercy is seen as His active compassion that brings relief from affliction and ultimately secures salvation, inspiring believers to extend that same mercy to others.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 16, Communicable Attributes, Part 3, Gracious & Merciful

Study Guide: God is Gracious and Merciful

Key Concepts

- **Grace:** God's deep compassion, especially for His people, giving them undeserved favor and the opposite of what they deserve. This includes the knowledge of Him and eternal life.
- **Mercy:** God seeing our affliction and moving to relieve it. While sometimes involving the withholding of deserved judgment, it more commonly refers to God's active compassion in the face of misery.
- **Overlap of Attributes:** God's love, grace, mercy, goodness, and patience are closely linked and often used for emphasis rather than sharp distinction in Scripture.
- **Saving Grace:** God's love extended to those who deserve His wrath, resulting in salvation, new birth, calling, justification, and forgiveness.
- **Enabling Grace:** God's powerful love that enables believers to live the Christian life, providing strength and empowering service.
- **Grace in the Trinity:** The Father is the God of all grace, the Son is full of grace and truth, and the Spirit is the Spirit of grace.
- **Grace in Salvation:** Salvation is fundamentally by grace through faith, not by human works or effort.
- **Grace in the Christian Life:** Believers not only are saved by grace but also live by grace through faith, requiring it for daily living and service.
- **Mercy and Affliction:** God's mercy is often displayed when He sees and responds to the distress and suffering of His people.
- **Mercy and Repentance:** While sometimes mercy is contingent on repentance, at other times God's mercy is the very motivation for repentance.
- **Mercy and Salvation:** God's mercy is a primary driver of salvation, freely given according to His will and compassion.

- **Mercy in Believers' Lives:** Having received God's mercy, believers are called to show mercy and forgiveness to others.
- **Past, Present, and Future Grace:** God's grace has saved us, sustains us, and is the focus of our future hope at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Quiz

1. Define God's grace according to the lecture. How does it relate to what people deserve?
2. Describe the relationship between God's love, grace, and mercy as presented in the lecture. Are they identical? Explain your reasoning.
3. What is the primary meaning of God's mercy, according to Dr. Peterson? How does this differ from the idea of God withholding judgment?
4. Explain the distinction between "saving grace" and "enabling grace." Provide a brief example of each from the lecture.
5. How is grace exemplified within the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)? Provide a scriptural reference for each if possible.
6. According to the lecture, how is salvation related to God's grace and human effort? Cite a passage used to support this point.
7. In what ways does God's grace impact the daily lives of Christian believers beyond initial salvation? Provide an example.
8. Describe a key Old Testament example used in the lecture to illustrate God's mercy towards His people.
9. How did Jesus demonstrate God's mercy during his earthly ministry, according to the lecture? Give at least two examples.
10. Explain the concept of past, present, and future grace as discussed in the lecture. Provide a scriptural reference for the idea of future grace.

Answer Key

1. God's grace is defined as His deep compassion, especially for His own people, giving them undeserved favor and the opposite of what they deserve. This means that instead of receiving the punishment their sins warrant, God bestows blessings and kindness upon them.

2. The lecture suggests that God's love, grace, and mercy are closely linked and often treated almost synonymously in Scripture, with a great overlap in their meanings. While not entirely identical, the terms are frequently piled up for emphasis rather than to denote sharp distinctions.
3. The primary meaning of God's mercy, as presented, is God seeing our affliction and being moved to relieve it. While mercy sometimes involves withholding deserved judgment, the more common biblical understanding is God's active compassion in response to human misery.
4. Saving grace refers to God's love that saves us from His wrath, leading to salvation. Enabling grace is the power and love of God that empowers believers to live the Christian life and serve Him effectively after being saved.
5. The Father is referred to as the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10). The Son is described as being full of grace and truth (John 1:14). The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29).
6. Salvation is presented as entirely dependent on God's grace through faith, not on any works or efforts of humanity (Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5, Romans 9:16). Human will or effort plays no part in earning salvation; it is a gift of God's gracious mercy.
7. Beyond salvation, God's grace is essential for living the Christian life, providing strength to overcome sin, enabling service through spiritual gifts (1 Peter 4:10), and requiring believers to approach the throne of grace for help in times of need (Hebrews 4:16).
8. A key Old Testament example of God's mercy is seen in Exodus 3:7, where God sees the misery of His people in Egyptian bondage and moves to rescue them through Moses, bringing them to the promised land.
9. Jesus demonstrated God's mercy through various acts of compassion, such as healing the blind (Matthew 9:27-29, Luke 18:35-43), casting out demons (Matthew 15:22-28), and having compassion on the distressed crowds (Matthew 9:36).
10. Past grace refers to the grace that saved believers at the point of conversion (Ephesians 2:8). Present grace is the enabling grace that believers receive from the throne of grace to live for God in their daily lives (Hebrews 4:16). Future grace is the grace that will be fully revealed at the return of Jesus Christ, on which believers are to set their hope (1 Peter 1:13).

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the interconnectedness of God's attributes of love, grace, and mercy as presented in the lecture. Provide scriptural examples to support your understanding of their relationship.
2. Compare and contrast the concepts of "saving grace" and "enabling grace." Why is understanding this distinction important for the Christian life?
3. Analyze the role of God's grace in salvation according to the lecture. How does this understanding challenge or affirm different perspectives on how humanity is saved?
4. Explore the practical implications of understanding God as both gracious and merciful for the way believers are called to live and interact with others.
5. Examine the concept of grace as past, present, and future in the believer's life. How does this temporal understanding of grace shape Christian hope and perseverance?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Communicable Attributes:** Characteristics of God that humans can reflect in a limited way. Examples from the lecture include grace and mercy.
- **Unmerited Favor:** A key aspect of grace, indicating that God's kindness and blessings are not earned or deserved by the recipient.
- **Atonement:** The work of Jesus Christ in his life and death by which God himself dealt with the problem of human sin, providing forgiveness and reconciliation.
- **Justification:** The act by which God declares a sinner righteous in His sight through faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Regeneration:** The work of the Holy Spirit by which a person is born again, receiving a new spiritual life and nature.
- **Sanctification:** The ongoing process by which believers are made more holy and conformed to the image of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- **Spiritual Gifts:** Special abilities or endowments given by the Holy Spirit to believers for the building up of the church and the service of others, often viewed as expressions of God's manifold grace.
- **Longsuffering (Patience):** God's attribute of bearing with human sin and rebellion without immediately resorting to judgment. (Mentioned as a related attribute in the lecture).
- **Gospel of God's Grace:** The message of salvation through Jesus Christ, emphasizing that salvation is a free gift from God based on His grace.
- **Throne of Grace:** A metaphorical representation of God's presence and accessibility, where believers can confidently come to receive mercy and find grace to help in times of need (Hebrews 4:16).

5. FAQs on Peterson, Theology Proper: God, Session 16, Communicable Attributes, Part 3, Gracious & Merciful, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: God's Grace and Mercy

1. What does it mean that God is gracious?

God's graciousness signifies his deep compassion for all, especially his people, and his act of giving them undeserved favor, the opposite of what they rightly deserve. This grace is fundamental to God's character, as highlighted in Exodus 34:6, which describes the Lord as "compassionate and gracious." It involves bestowing blessings like the knowledge of himself and eternal life, freely given without any merit on the part of the recipient.

2. How are God's grace and mercy related to his other attributes like love and goodness?

God's love, grace, mercy, goodness, and generosity are closely linked and often overlap significantly. While they are not entirely identical, these terms are frequently used in Scripture to emphasize different facets of God's compassionate character. For instance, Ephesians 2:4-10 and Titus 3:3-8 illustrate how these attributes work together in God's saving actions. Images like God as the father of orphans and widows (Psalm 68:5), husband (Hosea 3:1), and parent (Hosea 11) further depict his loving and gracious nature.

3. How is grace manifested in the Old and New Testaments?

While God's grace is evident throughout the Old Testament, preserving a remnant (Ezra 9:8-9) and granting favor (Psalm 84:10-11), its display is even more pronounced in the New Testament. Old Testament prophets foretold this coming grace (1 Peter 1:10-11). The gospel message itself is described as "the gospel of God's grace" (Acts 20:24), bringing salvation to all people (Titus 2:11), not just Israel.

4. What are the different dimensions or types of grace discussed in the source?

Theologians often distinguish between "initial saving grace" and "enabling grace." Saving grace refers to God's unmerited love that saves us from his wrath. Enabling grace is the power God gives to his people to live for him and persevere in the Christian life. However, it's important to remember that both aspects involve God's love and power,

with a different emphasis. Saving grace addresses our need for redemption, while enabling grace equips us for ongoing obedience and service.

5. How does God's grace impact the life of a believer?

God's grace is foundational to the entire Christian experience. We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), and this grace extends to our new birth, calling, justification, and forgiveness. Furthermore, we live by grace through faith, needing to approach the "throne of grace" for mercy and help (Hebrews 4:16). God's grace empowers us to live holy lives (Romans 6:1-4), use our spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6, 1 Peter 4:10), and speak gracious words that build others up (Ephesians 4:29). This grace pertains to our past salvation, our present walk with God, and our future hope at the return of Christ (1 Peter 1:13).

6. What does it mean that God is merciful?

God's mercy is defined as his disposition to see our affliction and be moved to relieve it. While sometimes it involves withholding deserved judgment (Psalm 103:10), the more common biblical understanding is God's active compassion in response to our misery, as seen in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 3:7). Mercy is an expression of God's love and goodness, closely related to his grace.

7. How is God's mercy demonstrated in Scripture, particularly through Jesus?

God's mercy is evident throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament, his mercy is seen in his covenant with his people (Hosea 2:14-23). The New Testament reveals an overflow of God's mercy, especially through Jesus. Jesus showed compassion for the distressed crowds (Matthew 9:36), healed the afflicted (Matthew 9:27-29, Luke 18:35-43), and cast out demons (Matthew 15:22-28, Mark 5:1-20). Supremely, God's mercy brings salvation, which does not depend on human effort but on God's compassionate will (Romans 9:16).

8. How should believers respond to God's grace and mercy?

Having received God's immense grace and mercy, believers are called to extend that same compassion to others (Matthew 5:7). We are to forgive each other as God in Christ has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32). Our understanding of God's mercy should motivate us to be generous and merciful towards those around us, recognizing our own constant need for God's grace.