

Is Grace an Attribute of God?

First, some definitions. An attribute is “a quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone or something” (“New Oxford American Dictionary”). A being is never without its attributes. Without one of the attributes of humanity, a human being is not human. Without one of His attributes, God would not be God.

The question before us has to do with whether or not God is always gracious. Certainly, God is gracious.

- *You are a God of forgiveness, Gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness* (Nehemiah 9:17).
- *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).

But is grace a part of God’s essential character? Is He ever not gracious? There seems to be a time when the grace of God is not granted. But if grace is an attribute of God, then the grace must always be a part of God. So how is it is sometimes not granted? *So, I will hurl you out of this land into the land which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers; and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will grant you no grace* (Jeremiah 16:13).

On the other hand, there are several passages where missionaries who are sent, and the brethren who remain, are turned over to the grace of God. That seems to indicate that the grace of God is always available.

- *From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished* (Acts 14:26).
- *But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord* (Acts 15:40).

Also, the book of Hebrews describes the Holy Spirit as *the Spirit of grace* (Hebrews 10:29). So it seems that grace is identified with the Holy Spirit. Since the Spirit is one of the persons of the godhead, we must conclude that grace is inseparably connected to God.

Ephesians 2 tells us that we were children of the wrath of God and now we are saved by the grace of God. If grace is an attribute of God, it would seem like wrath is also an attribute of God (John 3:36; Romans 1:18; 5:9; 12:19). God does not always pour out wrath, nor does He always extend grace, yet both seem to always be available. *Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)* (Ephesians 2:3-5).

Conclusions About Grace as an Attribute of God

If grace is an attribute of God, and maybe it is, it needs to be stated differently from attributes like omniscience, sovereignty or love. Categorically speaking, the grace of God is much like the wrath of God. If you say that grace is an attribute of God, then should you also say that wrath is an attribute of God. I suggest (without any entomological reason) that we use the word **attribute** to describe the regular attributes of God that are always in play all the time, and the word **characteristic** to describe those aspects of God’s nature which are always present but not always exercised. In that case **grace would be characteristic of God**.

Twelve Attributes of God

1. Omnipresence
2. Omnipotence
3. Omniscience
4. Justice
5. Eternity
6. Sovereignty
7. Unity/Trinity
8. Infinity
9. Truth
10. Holiness
11. Immutability
(Unchanging)
12. Love

Seven Attributes of Man

1. Body
2. Intellect
3. Emotion
4. Will
5. Morality
6. Purpose/ Destiny
7. Creativity