

- I. Session 53: The Grace of God Part 5: Common Grace Part 2: God's restraint of wrath
- a. Review: We have been looking at the grace of God for the fifth week. First week we looked at the grace of God in the Old Testament. The second week we look into the Grace of the God in the New Testament specifically, (1) God's grace is an attribute found in all three members of the members of the Trinity, (2) and the grace of God seen in salvation of sinners. The third week we looked at the grace of God in the New Testament specifically (3) God's grace and sanctification (4) and God's grace in ministry. The fifth week we began looking at God's common grace including His common grace in restraining sin.
  - b. Purpose: In this session we shall explore the attribute of the grace of God as it manifest as common grace. We will see God's common grace in restraining His own wrath. We will then draw implications of this doctrine to apply to the Christian life.
  - c. Recap of the definition of Common Grace
    - i. John Murray: "Every favour of whatever kind or degree, falling short of salvation, which this undeserving and sin-cursed world enjoys at the hand of God."<sup>1</sup>
    - ii. My definition: The unmerited favor of God that both the saved/elect and nonsaved/non-elect can commonly be recipients of from God.
    - iii. God restrains His own wrath.
    - iv. When we look even more specifically at God's restraint of sin, we see He restrains the sin of men and also demonic beings.
  - d. What do we mean by God's Common Grace Restrains Wrath?
    - i. Meaning: By common grace as restraining evil we mean that God has shown favor to both the saved and non-saved in that God did not immediately pour out His wrath right away against sinners but has given a measure of time in which He restrain His wrath to come.
    - ii. A right understanding is important:
      1. God restraining His own wrath does not mean He will never judge sin or pour forth His wrath.
      2. Since this is "common" grace, Christians must also understand that they were also recipients of His common grace that restrains His wrath, or otherwise believers would never have had the opportunity for repentance, faith and salvation.
  - e. The Bible's teaching on how God restrains His own wrath
    - i. Here we see an overlap of God's attribute of longsuffering when we are talking about God's restraint of His own wrath. So verses we have seen earlier teaching on God's longsuffering applies here as well.
    - ii. "*And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall [d]bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.*" (**Genesis 3:15**)

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in John Frame, *Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 429.

1. In context, remember God's prohibition to Adam and Eve: "*but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not [n]eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.*" (Genesis 2:17)
2. Adam and Eve sinned by eating of the fruit in Genesis 3:6.
3. Noticed the restraint of God with Eve when she didn't die right away!
  - a. Here in Genesis 3:15 we see the promise that she will have at least one "seed," meaning she will live long enough to have at least one children and that's a promise.
  - b. Of course Eve lived long to have many other children! In the next verse, verse 16, we see "Children" in the plural being mentioned!
  - c. This is contrary to what she deserved which is death, and thus we see the action of grace here.
  - d. It is an action of God's grace to both believers and unbelievers who are descendants of Eve.
- iii. "*Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. 18 'Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the [g]plants of the field; 19 By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.'*" (Genesis 3:17-19)
  1. This passage describes God's curse against Adam for his sin.
  2. We see common grace hinted at even with verse 17 when God says "*which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'*"
    - a. This is reiteration of Genesis 2:17.
    - b. But there is a portion missing from Genesis 2:17: "*for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.*"
    - c. God does this intentionally because He is restraining the full wrath that Adam deserved.
  3. In light of the second half of Genesis 2:17 we should thus see the curse in verse 18 as an act of common grace: "*Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the [g]plants of the field;*"
    - a. Instead of instant death, Adam is described as sill having a future: "*And you will eat the plants*"
    - b. Instead of instant death, Adam is described as being punished with "*thorns and thistle*" in the field
  4. Again, in light of the second half of Genesis 2:17 we should thus see the curse in verse 19 as an act of common grace: "*By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the*"

*ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."*

- a. Instead of instant death, Adam is described as still having a future: "*You will eat bread,*"
  - b. Instead of instant death, Adam's ability to eat bread will be frustrated with "*the sweat of your face*"
  - c. Finally the death is still going to happen, but not instantly: "*Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.*"
  - d. Again this is an action of God's common grace that has benefited both believers and unbelievers who are descendants of Adam and have lived.
- iv. "*Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.*" (**Genesis 15:16**)
1. The context of this verse is in a chapter which gives us the Abrahamic Covenant.
  2. This verse is in a context of surrounding verses that predicts the future such as the Hebrews being enslaved in another country (**v.13**), God allowing them an exodus (**v.14**) and Abraham being buried one day in the promise land (**v.15**).
  3. In this verse we also see that the return of the Hebrews to the promise land will take place during "*the fourth generation*"
  4. Why? "*for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.*"
  5. Thus we see God does restrain His wrath against the Amorites from being right away.
- v. "*In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;*" (**Acts 14:16**)
1. The context of this verse is the words of Paul as he preached to those in Lystra.
  2. The people listening were unbelieving Gentiles in light of the mention of Zeus' temple (**v.13**), pagan priest (**v.13**) and the people's confusion of Paul and Baranabas as Zeus and Hermes respectively (**v.12**).
  3. Thus with Gentiles in mind, Paul tells them that in the past God has allow the Gentiles (Hebrew word is "*nations*") to sin without facing God's full wrath.
  4. This is actually his appeal in light of Paul's call for them to come to "the living God" in **verse 15**.
  5. **Does this mean that the sins of previous generations are totally not sins at all?** That people have gotten away with it? Don't forget **Genesis 15:16** and the truth that God does Gentiles wickedness. Rather we should understand **Acts 14:16** and others like it as referring to God's restraint of wrath, not totally not judging at all with His wrath.

- vi. *“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,” (Acts 17:30)*
    - 1. The context of this verse is Paul’s speech to those in Athens.
    - 2. Paul’s audience are Gentiles and Greek philosophers and we must keep that in mind.
    - 3. Here Paul says that in the past God *“overlooked the times of ignorance.”*
    - 4. This demonstrate God’s restraining His wrath since there were sins that still must demand sinners to repent.
    - 5. Does this mean sins in the past will never be dealt with? Those sins might not have faced the wrath of God at the time but **verse 31** tells us that God *“has fixed a day in which He will judge [u]the world in righteousness [v]through a Man whom He has appointed”*
  - vii. *“whom God displayed publicly as a [a]propitiation [b]in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, [c]because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;” (Romans 3:25)*
    - 1. This verse is in a passage that talks about Christ’s work in saving sinners.
    - 2. God previously didn’t judge other sins.
    - 3. Yet God must still be just but how? **Verse 26** gives us a hint: *“for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who [q]has faith in Jesus.”*
  - viii. Why would God bear with sinners with restraint? *“and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,” (2 Peter 3:15)*
    - 1. Peter was writing to those who were seriously persecuted. They probably want God’s justice already!
    - 2. Yet Peter tells them what’s going on and why: *“regard the patience of our Lord as salvation;”*
    - 3. Peter tells us this is taught by Paul also! Where? Could he be thinking of **Romans 3:25**?
- f. Implications
- i. Even as you evangelize, there is a place to point out to the unbeliever God’s Common grace to them in terms of God restraining His wrath.
  - ii. We also must be patient with others: *“rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer;” (Romans 12:12)*