

This is our eleventh study of the “Attributes of God.”

We are using Attributes of God, by A. W. Pink as the platform for this series of studies.

Published by

Chapel Library

2603 West Wright St. • Pensacola, Florida 32505 USA

*Sending Christ-centered materials from prior centuries worldwide*

**Worldwide:** please use the online downloads worldwide without charge.

**In North America:** please write for a printed copy without charge.

*We do not ask for donations, send promotional mailings, or share the mailing list.*

Attributes of God

by A. W. Pink

### **Contents**

Preface 2

Chapter 1 The Solitariness of God 2

Chapter 2 The Decrees of God 4

Chapter 3 The Knowledge of God 6

Chapter 4 The Foreknowledge of God 8

Chapter 5 The Supremacy of God 10

Chapter 6 The Sovereignty of God 12

Chapter 7 The Immutability of God 14

Chapter 8 The Holiness of God 15

Chapter 9 The Power of God 18

Chapter 10 The Faithfulness of God 20

Chapter 11 The Goodness of God 23

Chapter 12 The Patience of God 24

Chapter 13 The Grace of God 26

Chapter 14 The Mercy of God 28

Chapter 15 The Lovingkindness of God 30

Chapter 16 The Love of God 32

Chapter 17 The Love of God to Us 34

Chapter 18 The Wrath of God 36

Chapter 19 The Contemplation of God 38

Index of Authors Quoted 40

*The Attributes of God*, by A. W. Pink. First Printing 1930. First Chapel Library edition 1993. Printed in the United States of America.

© Copyright 1993 by Chapel Library (this edition), Pensacola, Florida. Permission is expressly granted to reproduce this material by any means, provided:

- 1) it is not charged for beyond a nominal sum for cost of duplication
- 2) this copyright notice and all the text on this page is included.

A **Study Guide** is also available for this text, either in print or with this paperback text for online download from our web site. For copies or information on other Bible correspondence courses, please contact Mount Zion Bible Institute at the same address.

### **About the Author**

**Arthur W. Pink** was born in Nottingham, England in 1886, and born again of the Spirit of God in 1908. He studied at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, USA for only six weeks before beginning his pastoral work in Colorado. From there he pastored churches in California, Kentucky and South Carolina before moving on to Sidney, Australia for a brief period, preaching and teaching. In 1934, He returned to his native land, England, and in 1940 took up permanent residence on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, remaining there until his death twelve years later in 1952. Most of his works, including *The Attributes Of God*, first appeared as articles in the monthly *Studies In The Scriptures* published from 1922 to 1953.

## ***Lesson 9 The Grace and Mercy of God***

### **Chapter 13**

## **The Grace of God**

### ***A perfection of the divine character***

GRACE IS A PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER WHICH is exercised only toward the elect. Neither in the Old Testament nor in the New is the grace of God ever mentioned in connection with mankind generally, still less with the lower orders of His creatures. In this it is distinguished from “mercy,” for the mercy of God is “over all His works” (Psa 145:9). Grace is the sole source from which flows the goodwill, love, and salvation of God unto His chosen people. This attribute of the divine character was defined by Abraham Booth in his helpful book *The Reign of Grace* thus:

It is the eternal and absolute free favor of God, manifested in the vouchsafement of spiritual and eternal blessings to the guilty and the unworthy.

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. Nay, more; it is the favor of God shown to those who not only have no positive deserts of their own, but who are thoroughly ill-deserving and hell-deserving. It is completely unmerited and unsought, and is altogether unattracted by anything in or from or by the objects upon which it is bestowed. Grace can neither be bought, earned, nor won by the creature. If it could be, it would cease to be *grace*. When a thing is said to be of “grace,” we mean that the recipient has no claim upon it, that it was in nowise due him. It comes to him as pure charity, and, at first, unasked and undesired.

The fullest exposition of the amazing grace of God is to be found in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. In his writings “grace” stands in direct opposition to works and worthiness, *all* works and worthiness, of whatever kind or degree. This is abundantly clear from Romans 11:6, “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.” Grace and works will no more unite than an acid and an alkali. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9). The absolute favor of God can no more consist with human merit than oil and water will fuse into one (see also Rom 4:4-5).

There are three principal characteristics of divine grace. First, it is *eternal*. Grace was planned before it was exercised, purposed before it was imparted: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before* the world began” (2Ti 1:9). Secondly, it is *free*, for none did ever purchase it: “Being justified *freely* by His grace” (Rom 3:24). Thirdly, it is sovereign, because God exercises it toward and bestows it upon whom He pleases: “Even so might grace *reign*” (Rom 5:21). If grace “reigns” then it is on the throne, and the occupant of the throne is sovereign. Hence “the *throne* of grace” (Heb 4:16).

### ***God’s sovereign selection***

Just because grace is *unmerited* favor, it must be exercised in a *sovereign* manner. Therefore does the Lord declare, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious” (Exo 33:19). Were God to show grace to all of Adam’s descendants, men would at once conclude that He was righteously compelled to take them to heaven as a meet compensation for allowing the human race to fall into sin. But the great God is under no obligation to any of His creatures, least of all to those who are rebels against Him.

Eternal life is a *gift*, therefore it can neither be earned by good works, nor claimed as a right. Seeing that salvation *is* a “gift,” who has any right to tell God on whom He ought to bestow it? It is not that the Giver ever *refuses* this gift to any who seek it wholeheartedly, and according to the rules which He has prescribed. No! He refuses none who come to Him empty-handed and in the way of His appointing. But if out of a world of impenitent and unbelieving rebels, God is determined to exercise His sovereign right by choosing a limited number to be saved, who is wronged? Is God *obliged* to force His gift on those who value it not? Is God compelled to save those who are determined to go *their own way*?

But nothing more riles the natural man and brings to the surface his innate and inveterate enmity against God than to press upon him the eternity, the freeness, and the absolute sovereignty of divine grace. That God should have formed His purpose from everlasting, without in anywise consulting the creature, is too abasing for the unbroken heart. That grace cannot be earned or won by any efforts of man is too self-emptying for self-righteousness. And that grace singles out whom it pleases to be its favored objects arouses hot protests from haughty rebels. The clay rises up against the Potter and asks, “Why hast thou made me thus?” A lawless insurrectionist dares to call into question the justice of divine sovereignty.

The distinguishing grace of God is seen in saving those people whom He has sovereignly singled out to be His high favorites. By “distinguishing” we mean that grace discriminates, makes differences, chooses some and passes by others. It was distinguishing grace which selected Abraham from the midst of his idolatrous neighbors and made him “the friend of God.” It was distinguishing grace which saved “publicans and sinners,” but said of the religious Pharisees, “Let them alone” (Mat 15:14). Nowhere does the glory of God’s free and sovereign grace shine more conspicuously than in the unworthiness and unlikeliness of its objects. Beautifully was this illustrated by James Hervey, (1751):

Where sin has abounded, says the proclamation from the court of heaven, grace doth much more abound. Manasseh was a monster of barbarity, for he caused his own children to pass through the fire, and filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. Manasseh was an adept in iniquity, for he not only multiplied, and to an extravagant degree, his own sacrilegious impieties, but he poisoned the principles and perverted the manners of his subjects, making them do worse than the most detestable of the heathen idolaters (see 2Ch 33). Yet, through this superabundant grace he is humbled, he is reformed, and becomes a child of forgiving love, an heir of immortal glory.

Behold that bitter and bloody persecutor, Saul; when, breathing out threatenings and bent upon slaughter, he worried the lambs and put to death the disciples of Jesus. The havoc he had committed, the inoffensive families he had already ruined, were not sufficient to assuage his vengeful spirit. They were only a taste, which, instead of glutting the bloodhound, made him more closely pursue the track, and more eagerly pant for destruction. He is still athirst for violence and murder. So eager and insatiable is his thirst, that he even breathes out threatening and slaughter (Act 9:1). His words are spears and arrows, and his tongue a sharp sword. 'Tis as natural for him to menace the Christians as to breathe the air. Nay, they bled every hour in the purposes of his rancorous heart. It is only owing to want of power that every syllable he utters, every breath he draws, does not deal out deaths, and cause some of the innocent disciples to fall. Who, upon the principles of human judgment, would not have pronounced him a vessel of wrath, destined to unavoidable damnation? Nay, who would not have been ready to conclude that, if there were heavier chains and a deeper dungeon in the world of woe, they must surely be reserved for such an implacable enemy of true godliness? Yet, admire and adore the inexhaustible treasures of grace— this Saul is admitted into the goodly fellowship of the prophets, is numbered with the noble army of martyrs and makes a distinguished figure among the glorious company of the apostles.

The Corinthians were flagitious [shamefully wicked] even to a proverb [to the point of making a standard phrase in the language]. Some of them wallowed in such abominable vices, and habituated themselves to such outrageous acts of injustice, as were a reproach to human nature. Yet even these sons of violence and slaves of sensuality were washed, sanctified, justified (1Co 6:9-11). “Washed,” in the precious blood of a dying Redeemer; “sanctified,” by the powerful operations of the blessed Spirit; “justified,” through the infinitely tender mercies of a gracious God. Those who were once the burden of the earth are now the joy of heaven, the delight of angels.

Now the grace of God is manifested *in and by and through the Lord Jesus Christ*. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). This does not mean that God never exercised grace toward any before His Son became incarnate—Genesis 6:8, Exodus 33:19, etc., clearly show otherwise. But grace and truth were fully revealed and perfectly exemplified when the Redeemer came to this earth, and died for His people upon the cross. It is through Christ the Mediator alone that the grace of God flows to His elect. “Much more the grace of God, and the gift of grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ...much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life *by one*, Jesus Christ...so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life *by Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Rom 5:15,17,21).

The grace of God is *proclaimed in the Gospel* (Act 20:24), which is to the self-righteous Jew a “stumbling block,” and to the conceited and philosophizing Greek “foolishness.” And why so? Because there is nothing whatever in it that is adapted to the gratifying of the pride of man. It announces that unless we are saved by grace, we cannot be saved at all. It declares that apart from Christ, the unspeakable Gift of God’s grace, the state of every man is desperate, irremediable, hopeless. The Gospel addresses men as guilty, condemned, perishing criminals. It declares that the most chaste moralist is in the same terrible plight as is the most voluptuous profligate; and the zealous professor, with all his religious performances, is no better off than the most profane infidel.

The Gospel contemplates every descendant of Adam as a fallen, polluted, hell-deserving and helpless sinner. The grace which the Gospel publishes is his only hope. All stand before God convicted as transgressors of His holy Law, as guilty and condemned criminals, who are not merely awaiting sentence, but the execution of the sentence already passed upon them (Joh 3:18; Rom 3:19). To complain against the partiality of grace is suicidal. If the sinner insists upon bare justice, then the Lake of Fire must be his eternal portion. His only hope lies in bowing to the sentence which divine justice has passed upon him, owning the absolute righteousness of it, casting himself on the mercy of God, and stretching forth empty hands to avail himself of the grace of God now made known to him in the Gospel.

The third Person in the Godhead is the *Communicator of grace*, therefore is He denominated “the Spirit of grace” (Zech 12:10). God the Father is the Fountain of all grace, for He purposed in Himself the everlasting covenant of redemption. God the Son is the only Channel of grace. The Gospel is the Publisher of grace. The Spirit is the Bestrew. He is the One who applies the Gospel in saving power to the soul: quickening the elect while spiritually dead, conquering their rebellious wills, melting their hard hearts, opening their blind eyes, cleansing them from the leprosy of sin. Thus we may say with the late G.S. Bishop:

Grace is a provision for men who are so fallen that they cannot lift the ax of justice, so corrupt that they cannot change their own natures, so averse to God that they cannot turn to Him, so blind that 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.

## Chapter 14

### The Mercy of God

#### *God's mercy originates in His goodness.*

“O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD: FOR HE IS GOOD: FOR His mercy endureth for ever” (Psa 136:1). For this perfection of the divine character God is greatly to be praised. Three times over in as many verses does the Psalmist here call upon the saints to give thanks unto the Lord for this adorable attribute. And surely this is the least that can be asked for from those who have been recipients of such bounty. When we contemplate the characteristics of this divine excellency, we cannot do otherwise than bless God for it. His mercy is “great” (1Ki 3:6), “plenteous” (Psa 86:5), “tender” (Luk 1:78), “abundant” (1Pe 1:3); it is “from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him” (Psa 103:17). Well may we say with the Psalmist, “I will sing aloud of thy mercy” (59:16).

“I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” (Exo 33:19). Wherein differs the “mercy” of God from His “grace”? The mercy of God has its spring in the divine goodness. The first issue of God’s goodness is his benignity or bounty, by which He gives liberally to His creatures as creatures; thus has He given being and life to all things. The second issue of God’s goodness is His mercy, which denotes the ready inclination of God to relieve the misery of fallen creatures. Thus, mercy presupposes *sin*.

Though it may not be easy at the first consideration to perceive a real difference between the grace and the mercy of God, it helps us thereto if we carefully ponder His dealings with the unfallen angels. He has never exercised mercy toward them, for they have never stood in any need thereof, not having sinned or come beneath the effects of the curse. Yet, they certainly are the objects of God’s free and sovereign grace. First, because of His *election* of them from out of the whole angelic race (1Ti 5:21). Secondly, and in consequence of their election, because of His *preservation* of them from apostasy, when Satan rebelled and dragged down with him one-third of the celestial hosts (Rev 12:4). Thirdly, in making Christ their *Head* (Col 2:10; 1Pe 3:22), whereby they are eternally secured in the holy condition in which they were created. Fourthly, because of the exalted *position* which has been assigned them: to live in God’s immediate presence (Dan 7:10), to serve Him constantly in His heavenly temple, to receive honorable commissions from Him (Heb 1:14). This is abundant *grace* toward them; but “mercy” it is not.

In endeavoring to study the mercy of God as it is set forth in Scripture, a threefold distinction needs to be made, if the Word of Truth is to be “rightly divided” thereon. First, there is a *general* mercy of God, which is extended not only to all men, believers and unbelievers alike, but also to the entire creation: “His tender mercies are over *all* His works” (Psa 145:9); “He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Act 17:25). God has pity upon the brute creation in their need, and supplies them with suitable provision. Secondly, there is a *special* mercy of God, which is exercised toward the children of men, helping and succoring them, notwithstanding their sins. To them also He communicates all the necessities of life: “for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mat 5:45). Thirdly, there is a *sovereign* mercy which is reserved for the heirs of salvation, which is communicated to them in a covenant way, through the Mediator.

## ***The bestowing of His mercy***

Following out a little further the difference between the second and third distinctions pointed out above, it is important to note that the mercies which God bestows on the wicked are solely of a *temporal* nature; that is to say, they are confined strictly to this present life. There will be no mercy extended to them beyond the grave: “It is a people of no understanding: therefore He that made them will not have mercy on them, and He that formed them will show them no favor” (Isa 27:11). But at this point a difficulty may suggest itself to some of our readers, namely, Does not Scripture affirm that “His mercy endureth for ever” (Psa 136:1)? Two things need to be pointed out in that connection. God can never cease to be merciful, for this is a quality of the divine essence (Psa 116:5); but the *exercise* of His mercy is regulated by His sovereign will. This must be so, for there is nothing outside Himself which obliges Him to act; if there were, that “something” would be *supreme*, and God would cease to be *God*.

It is pure sovereign grace which alone determines the exercise of divine mercy. God expressly affirms this fact in Romans 9:15, “For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom *I will* have mercy.” It is not the wretchedness of the creature which causes Him to show mercy, for God is not influenced by things outside of Himself as we are. If God *were* influenced by the abject misery of leprous sinners, He would cleanse and save *all* of them. But He does not. Why? Simply because it is not His pleasure and purpose so to do. Still less is it the merits of the creatures which causes Him to bestow mercies upon them, for it is a contradiction in terms to speak of *meriting* “mercy.” “*Not* by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” (Ti 3:5)—the one standing in direct antithesis to the other. Nor is it the merit of Christ which moves God to bestow mercies on His elect: that would be substituting the effect for the cause. It is “through” or because of the tender mercy of our God that Christ was sent here to His people (Luk 1:78). The merits of Christ make it possible for God to *righteously* bestow spiritual mercies on His elect, justice having been fully satisfied by the Surety! No, mercy arises *solely* from God’s imperial pleasure.

## ***Who shall receive God’s mercies?***

Again, though it be true, blessedly and gloriously true, that God’s mercy “endureth for ever,” yet we must observe carefully the objects *to whom* His “mercy” is shown. Even the casting of the reprobate into the Lake of Fire is an act of *mercy*. The punishment of the wicked is to be contemplated from a threefold viewpoint. From God’s side, it is an act of *justice*, vindicating His honour. The mercy of God is never shown to the prejudice of His holiness and righteousness. From their side, it is an act of *equity*, when they are made to suffer the due reward of their iniquities. But from the standpoint of the redeemed, the punishment of the wicked is an act of unspeakable *mercy*. How dreadful would it be if the present order of things, when the children of God are obliged to live in the midst of the children of the Devil, should continue for ever! Heaven would at once cease to be heaven if the ears of the saints still heard the blasphemous and filthy language of the reprobate. What a mercy that in the New Jerusalem “there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination” (Rev 21:27)!

Lest the reader might think in the last paragraph we have been drawing upon our imagination, let us appeal to Holy Scripture in support of what has been said. In Psalm 143:12 we find David praying, “And of thy *mercy* cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.” Again, in Psalm 136:15 we read that God “overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: *for His mercy* endureth for ever.” It was an act of vengeance upon Pharaoh and his host, but it was an act of mercy unto the Israelites. Again, in Revelation 19:1-3 we read:



*I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.*

From what has just been before us, let us note how vain is the presumptuous hope of the wicked, who, notwithstanding their continued defiance of God, nevertheless count upon His being merciful to them. How many there are who say, I do not believe that God will ever cast me into Hell; He is too merciful. Such a hope is a viper, which if cherished in their bosoms will sting them to death. God is a God of justice as well as mercy, and He has expressly declared that He will “by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7). Yea, He has said, “The wicked *shall* be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psa 9:17). As well might men reason thus: I do not believe that if filth be allowed to accumulate and sewage become stagnant and people deprive themselves of fresh air, that a merciful God will let them fall a prey to a deadly fever. The fact is that those who neglect the laws of health *are* carried away by disease, notwithstanding God’s mercy. Equally true is it that those who neglect the laws of spiritual health shall forever suffer the second death.

Unspeakably solemn is it to see so many *abusing* this divine perfection. They continue to despise God’s authority, trample upon His laws, continue in sin, and yet presume upon His mercy. But God will not be unjust to Himself. God shows mercy to the truly penitent, but not to the impenitent (Luk 13:3). To continue in sin and yet reckon upon divine mercy remitting punishment is diabolical. It is saying, “Let us do evil that good may come,” and of all such it is written that their “damnation is just” (Rom 3:8). Presumption shall most certainly be disappointed; read carefully Deuteronomy 29:18-20. Christ is the spiritual Mercyseat, and all who despise and reject His Lordship shall “perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little” (Psa 2:12).

But let our final thought be of God’s spiritual mercies unto His own people. “Thy mercy is great unto the heavens” (Psa 57:10). The riches thereof transcend our loftiest thought. “For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear him” (Psa 103:11). None can measure it. The elect are designated “vessels of mercy” (Rom 9:23). It is mercy that quickened them when they were dead in sins (Eph 2:4-5). It is mercy that saves them (Ti 3:5). It is His abundant mercy which begat them unto an eternal inheritance (1Pe 1:3). Time would fail us to tell of His preserving, sustaining, pardoning, supplying mercy. Unto His own, God is “the Father of mercies” (2Co 1:3).

*“When all Thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys,  
Transported with the view I’m lost,  
In wonder, love, and praise.”*

## ***Study Questions: Lesson 9***

### ***Chapter 13 The Grace of God***

*First please read chapter 13 in the text.*

#### ***RESPONSE***

*A perfection of the divine character*

1.
  - a. Who are the recipients of grace?
  - b. How and on what basis is grace bestowed?
  - c. What is meant when a thing is said to be of “grace?”
2. What issue does Paul discuss in opposition to grace, and what is his key point? Please write out the two Scripture verses with your answer.
3. What are the three characteristics of divine grace? Include Scripture references and key points.

*God’s sovereign selection*

4. What does the Lord declare in Ex. 33:19 regarding His gift of unmerited favor?
5.
  - a. What is the meaning of the phrase, “the distinguishing grace of God?”
  - b. What does “distinguishing grace” do?
6. How is the grace of God manifested? Include Scripture reference and key point.
7.
  - a. Why is the grace of God a “stumbling block” and “foolishness” to some people?
  - b. What does Scripture say about the state of man’s condition without God’s grace?
  - c. What is man’s only hope?
8. Please explain the identity of the following:
  - a. The Communicator and Bestower of grace. Also explain what He does.
  - b. The Fountain of all grace
  - c. The Channel of grace
  - d. The Publisher of grace

#### ***REFLECTION***

9. Read again the quote from James Hervey, in the section *God’s sovereign selection*, which is a rich example of God’s grace in action. Has your understanding of the grace of God changed as a result of this lesson? Please explain.

## **Chapter 14 The Mercy of God**

*First please read chapter 14 in the text.*

### **RESPONSE**

*God's mercy originates in His goodness*

10. List the three types of mercies provided by God. Include the Scripture references and key points.

*The bestowing of His mercy*

11. a. How are God's mercies which are extended to the wicked, different from those extended to believers?

b. In Psalms 116:5, Scripture affirms that "His mercy endureth forever." Please clarify this in consideration of the preceding answer.

12. a. What determines the exercise of God's mercy? Include Scripture reference and key point.

b. Is God influenced by man in the exercise of His mercy? Why? Include Scripture reference and key point.

[Note: We also know that God listens and responds to our prayers. How this goes together with His sovereign mercy is a mystery, beyond our understanding. "His ways are higher than our ways."]

*Who shall receive God's mercies*

13. Please explain the three points of view regarding the punishment of the wicked.

14. Explain what is meant that God will not be *unjust* to Himself. Include Scripture references and key points.

### **MAKING IT PERSONAL**

15. Read again the first and last paragraphs of this chapter. Make a list of God's spiritual mercies that are given to His people. Along with each mercy, please write your own personal response (comments of praise, petition and/or personal thoughts).