

God's Character: Mercy

To really get to know God, one must take the time to understand what He means with His words and what He is communicating to us. It would be very frustrating for us if someone took our own words to say something we did not intend and misrepresent us! Grace is one such word that is misunderstood. How is grace different from mercy? It is very important to understand these terms, because it will help you know what you are doing and provide clarity in how you are to live.

1. When you look in Blueletterbible.org, you will discover that the Greek noun for mercy is "eleeō." The apostle Paul associates mercy with your disobedience and the disobedience of the nation of Israel. Observe carefully Paul's statement of Romans 11:28-32 within the context of the New Covenant in Ezekiel 36:17-28 and discuss what Paul meant.

From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy (**eleeō**) because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown (**eleeō**) to you they also may now be shown mercy (**eleeō**). For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy (**eleeō**) to all. (Rom 11:28-32, LSB)

"Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity. Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land, because they had defiled it with their idols. Also I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the lands. According to their ways and their deeds I judged them. Then they came to the nations to which they came. And they profaned My holy name because it was said of them, 'These are the people of Yahweh; yet they have come out of His land. But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says Lord Yahweh, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations, to which you have come. I will prove the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am Yahweh," declares Lord Yahweh, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. And I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your uncleanness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to do My judgments. And you will inhabit the land that I gave to your fathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. (Ezek 36:17-28, LSB)

2. Divine grace is the unmerited favor of providing the means of salvation that came at unfathomable cost of the Giver and in fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham. Carefully examine the following verses by the apostles Paul and Peter and discuss how is mercy different from grace.

I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He regarded me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy (**eleeō**) because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy saying and deserving full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost. Yet for this reason I was shown mercy (**eleeō**), so that in me as the foremost, Christ Jesus might demonstrate all His patience as an example for those who are going to believe upon Him for eternal life. (1 Tim 1:12-16, LSB)

But you are a chosen family, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy (**eleeō**), but now you have received mercy (**eleeō**). (1 Pet 2:9-10, LSB)

God's Character: Mercy Teacher Notes

To really get to know God, one must take the time to understand what He means with His words and what He is communicating to us. It would be very frustrating for us if someone took our own words to say something we did not intend and misrepresent us! Grace is one such word that is misunderstood. How is grace different from mercy? It is very important to understand these terms, because it will help you know what you are doing and provide clarity in how you are to live.

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To help the student understand Paul's statement of, "For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy (**eleeō**) because of their disobedience," ask the question: why did God make the New Covenant? Is this covenant conditional (requiring something of the other party)? Explore and discuss your observations of Romans 11:28-32.

It is important to understand what God is doing. Because of their habitual and incorrigible disobedience, the nation of Israel demonstrated that they were incapable of being God's people and nation of priests representing Him. To restore the holiness of His name and in fidelity of His unilateral unconditional covenant to Abraham to be God to his descendants, the New Covenant was made – God will provide a Savior that fulfills the function of the Mosaic Law such that one is saved by simply believing in the Savior who died in atonement of their sins.

Ask the student: what is the association between disobedience and mercy? What is the consequence of disobedience?

The Mosaic Covenant shows that the consequence of disobedience to God's word is judgment. With this context in mind, mercy is not receiving the punishment that justice demands. Through God's provision and belief in the Savior, one is absolved of God's divine judgment / consequence of sin.

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To help the student understand the difference between grace and mercy, ask the question: who receives God's grace? Who receives God's mercy?

God's grace is extended to all regardless of whether one has faith in God or not.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. (John 3:16-17, LSB)

God's mercy is the only alternative to the consequences of sin and is extended only to those who come to faith.