

Episode 251

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. Nelson, the director of video content, and Gwen, associate editor and also the manager of volunteer services, is joining me today. We're going to conclude our series on what are the attributes of God. Now, for a little background, this episode, we were actually supposed to record it, I don't know, four to six weeks ago, and stuff just kept coming up. Nelson got the flu, then I got the flu. Gwen's been very patient with both of us, saying, I've been ready this whole time. What's wrong with you two? So we're kind of hoping, and I think we're joking before recording started, that evidently there's some spiritual attack going on, hopefully, because God's going to do something special with this episode. So that's our hope for all the delays. So Gwen, Nelson, thank you for joining me.

Shea Houdmann

Last time, we kind of spoke on the attribute of love, but also with the connection from love to mercy and grace. Today's episode, we're going to be covering some other attributes, or not entirely sure, theologically speaking, whether these should be considered attributes of God or whether they're an outflow of another attribute. For example, most people consider mercy and grace to be an outflow of God's love. And later, we're going to talk about wrath. Is wrath an attribute of God, or is wrath a response to God's holiness, his righteousness being violated? So I don't know it's super important whether these are attributes, but these are things that are true of God, so therefore they're worth studying and understanding them to know God better.

Shea Houdmann

So last time, again, mercy and grace, and we didn't really get around to talking about grace as much as we would have liked, so we're going to start off there. So Gwen, what is the grace of God? What does it mean that God is gracious?

Gwen Sellers

So when we're talking about grace, it means to stoop in kindness to an inferior, and it brings those ideas of giving that which bestows joy or pleasure or kindness. So oftentimes we talk about grace being God giving us something that we don't deserve, which is true, but it also carries a larger idea than that. So we're thinking if you're stooping in kindness to an inferior, God, of course, is above everyone. And so really all that he does for us is grace, that he would do anything.

Gwen Sellers

But of course, we often think about this with salvation. So Ephesians 2 is kind of the quintessential, by grace you have been saved. So here's part of it. And I like that this connects back to God's mercy, which we talked about last time. So, but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved.

Gwen Sellers

And I think for me, when I think about the grace of God, obviously salvation is the biggest picture of that, the biggest example of that, but God's grace continues. It's not just, well, he had grace and we got saved. It's his grace continues on through our lives. And you see this a lot in the epistles. Paul often in his greetings says, you know, grace and peace. So it's really something that, yeah, I mean, as an attribute of God is something that characterizes who he is and his interactions with us. Nelson, what do you think about when you think of the grace of God?

Nelson Domingues

I mean, all the things you mentioned are great examples. I love how you mentioned almost like stooping down, doing something that you don't have to do. A lot of kindness, mercy, obviously grace is right there. I think when I think about grace, there's a lot of verses. I do think Ephesians as well, a little later in the verse you read, for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Ephesians 2:8. And I love that. We didn't do it. We didn't deserve it. We had no business getting it. We are sinners in need of a savior. And God so graciously creates a path for us. He didn't, he wasn't required to, he didn't have to, he didn't owe us salvation by any means. Just because we were created by him doesn't mean he has to also put up with us and put up with our sin.

Nelson Domingues

And so when we think about grace, he saw us and he saw our failure in our sin, and he still loved us. And we go back to Genesis, the very first, you know, book of the Bible, as Adam and Eve fail as well, and they fall into the trap of Satan and they sin. There's a picture of grace right away when God talks to them. In Ephesians, I'm sorry, in Genesis 3, verse 21, it says, And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them. And I always thought about that image of God being so merciful, so much grace in that whole picture that you see. Because think about any of the other reactions that he would have justifiably had in that. It's like, I just created paradise. I've been here for you all you've had my undivided attention in that sense. And yet, like any of us, we all would have sinned like any of us, they sinned. And yet he still didn't come into the garden with fire and fury. And he

still didn't come into the garden with pronouncements of solely condemnation on them and of profound disappointment on them. He showed grace. He didn't have to do any of those things. He could have let them crawl around on their bellies. It could have been the pathetic pieces of leaves that they try to cover themselves with. But yet he, in his love, provided for them. He, in that very verse, you see, creates the first animal sacrifice, in fact, as a payment for sin. And that is an amazing picture of we seeing God working on our behalf to save us. And yeah, the scriptures are full of God's grace.

Nelson Domingues

And like you, your definition is so good. And I always think about it is given the favor or the blessing or the kindness we do not deserve. And that's when I think about God's grace, I think about I am not deserving of his kindness and grace. And I am so thankful. I'm so thankful that we serve a God who shows us grace, even when we don't deserve it, especially when we don't deserve it. But he doesn't withhold it and he doesn't have us work towards it. It's not like, well, if you're nice to me, I'll be nice to you. You know, he could have worked out that system easily. He could have said, you know, if you do X, Y, Z, then I'll show you some favor. I'll show you some extra grace. I wouldn't have to do it anyway, but I'll still do that. And that would still be grace, but it's not the kind of grace our God shows. He shows us grace by giving us these good gifts, even when we don't deserve it at all and have done nothing to warrant it. And so, yeah, our God is full of grace. It's an amazing blessing that we share.

Shea Houdmann

When I think of grace, I always think of it as the thing that makes biblical Christianity different than every other, every other world religion to varying extents is what do I have to do to get God to accept me? 10 steps or 20 steps or a lifetime of steps or the Christian message of grace is that nothing you can do can make you worthy of salvation. But God, in his grace, gives us salvation as a gift that all we have to do is receive. We can't earn it. We can't deserve it. All we can do is receive it.

Shea Houdmann

And you think of in the New Testament, the Greek word for grace is also the word that's translated a gift. Like when you get to 1 Corinthians 12-14, speaking of spiritual gifts, it's really spiritual graces. The idea of a gift, like Nelson and Gwen, if I give you a gift, it's because I love you and I want to bless you. It's not because I owe you something. If I give you something because I owe you something, that's a completely different transaction. But a gift is something that's an expression of love from one person to another that the other did not deserve. I think that picture is so powerful and that truly is

what makes Christianity different, that we can't earn it. God gives it to us as a gift. All we have to do is receive in faith. And again, that's back to Ephesians 2:8-9, that salvation is by grace through faith, not of yourselves, the gift of God. That's, to me, the just a powerful reminder of something to be so grateful for is God's grace.

Gwen Sellers

Well, I love that connection with a gift because as we're talking about this, I'm thinking of the link between grace and generosity and just thinking that God is a God of abundance. And He freely gives that and freely bestows that on others. I'm reading through Deuteronomy right now and just struck by how the laws are set up in order for people to be kind to others, to not have a scarcity mindset. But when you go over your fields, leave the extra for those in need. And that's because we have a God who has been gracious to us, provided for us abundantly. And so we can be gracious to others and take care of them.

Gwen Sellers

And I love how God's laws are often, He links it to like, you were slaves in Egypt, so treat people kindly. Or like, I rescued you from Egypt, so do this. I'm thinking because God is gracious and generous, we are called to be the same. And I think we're free to be because God is so gracious. Like when we give that grace to other people or just give generously to other people, we don't lose anything because God keeps filling us with it. So yeah. So I just, I love the way that that links to that, to the whole gift concept.

Nelson Domingues

Yeah, it's His grace that I think really defines why we should forgive even as well. Like when someone sins against us, you know, 77 times, you know, we're to continue to forgive because God has shown us the grace of forgiving us. And He sets that example for each one of us. And so who He is, again, like all the other attributes, we want to aspire to do the same, to be just like God, to be people of grace in our relationships and our interactions, to do things for others when they don't deserve it, but out of love and out of kindness, out of the goodness of our own hearts, as well, as we've seen time after time, again, in scripture and as believers, we've experienced in a very profound way through our forgiveness by Jesus Christ, you know, by grace, we have been saved. And I think, wow, it is incredible that our God is a graceful God. And yet He gives us so many good reasons to also be people of grace.

Shea Houdmann

Like forgive as Christ has forgiven you. That's such a powerful reminder. Let's go ahead and transition to the next attribute today about the goodness of

God. Like what does it mean that God is good? We're talking about the love, the mercy, the grace, all wrapped together. And I think love is the overarching one, but the goodness of God, I think, flows out of His love as well. So Nelson, why don't you start us off with this one? What does it mean that God is good?

Nelson Domingues

This is one of these things, one of God's attributes that I think I talk about a lot with my kids, and the fact that when we pray together at night, I remind them and reminding myself at the same time, like we have to be people that are thankful. We have to look at our day, and we have to look around, and we have to remember the good that God has done in our life.

Nelson Domingues

And a verse that, for me, is just so powerful is James chapter 1, verse 17. It says, every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Every good gift is from God. And that helps define even my understanding of heaven and hell. The fact that all good things come from God, and which would mean hell is separation from God, which means there's no good in hell, right? And so we can think about that there's no good gift there at all. There's no experiences of good that we get to have there. It's complete separation from good.

Nelson Domingues

And then I try to, you know, explain that even to my kids and trying to say, like, we have to look around, and God causes the rain to fall on the good and on the evil. He, you know, Matthew chapter 5, verses 44 and 45 says, for He makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust. And we have this experience on earth, and this is God. Every good thing that we experience directly points to God. There's nothing that we experience that's truly good that hasn't come from Him. The fact that we get to breathe, the fact that anything good happens in our life, the fact we have food on the table today, that we woke up after taking a nap or after we sleep, everything good is a gift from God. And so we know whom to be thankful to every time something good happens in our life.

Nelson Domingues

And the reality is when we are separated from God, we are walking away from that goodness of God. And of course, hell is the final judgment that we will completely be separate from the of God. And that aptly describes what hell will be like. And that's a very scary thing. But on this side of heaven, we experience God's goodness nearly every second, every millisecond of our being. And I think that's an incredible thing to remember that everything good in our lives is a direct result of God Himself giving it.

Gwen Sellers

I love that you brought up that James verse because so right before that it talks about, you know, it's our desires that lead to sin. And when sin has fully come, like it brings forth death and then don't be deceived. Every good and perfect gift comes from God. And I think how often is that why we fall for sin? I mean, it seems to promise something good, but it only brings forth death. But instead, like God brings good. And I just appreciate that reminder and perspective.

Gwen Sellers

And I think for me, when thinking about the goodness of God, you know, when we're in challenging situations, Shay mentioned the podcast issues. Well, today my computer like is having total problems. So remembering, okay, God's like you are good and you have good in store and you love me. So not experiencing it while trying not to experience it as, you know, this total meltdown or, oh my gosh, my day's ruined. It's just, these are things that happen, but I can trust that I have a good God who is working all things together for good. I mean, that's another verse to think of is Romans 8:28, how God works all things together for the ultimate good. So that doesn't mean everything in our world is good, but that because we have a good God, who's also sovereign, he can work it all for the best.

Shea Houdmann

Well said. And it's interesting because I was thinking of that same verse about that God causes the rain on the just and the unjust, that God's goodness, he's good to everyone. Obviously that doesn't change in terms of where a person will spend eternity, either with experiencing the love and goodness of God or eternally separated from it. But in this world, God is good to everyone. Everyone is getting God's mercy. Everyone is getting God's grace because we're not ultimately getting what we deserve, which is eternal separation from him. So God's goodness is everywhere. It's always, whether you recognize it or not, God is being good to you right now.

Shea Houdmann

A few verses really stood out to me in preparation. Psalm 145:9, the Lord is good to all and his mercy is over all that he has made. Psalm 34:8, oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. And then Romans 8:28, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who have been called according to his purpose, that God does good to all. God works things together for good. Even in the midst of tragedy, things we don't understand, things we hate that those events have actually happened, God is still working in and through them to bring about good. And that just speaks to God's all-encompassing goodness.

Shea Houdmann

And so many things pass by us every day that we don't even recognize that that was an example of goodness of God. That was an example of the goodness of God. So easy to take for granted when you experience it all the time that you don't even recognize it anymore. But Scripture is filled with all these references to the goodness of God and different ways that he shows his goodness.

Shea Houodmann

That going from grace to goodness to another one that I think we also need to be very, very grateful for, and that's the patience of God, or to use the King James word, the long suffering of God. So Gwen, God's patience, why should we be so thankful for it? And what does it result in, in terms of how God relates to us?

Gwen Sellers

I think for me, 2 Peter 3 is the verse that first comes to mind with God's patience. So it says, 2 Peter 3:9, The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. And so the Hebrew word for patience carries the idea of like long in the nose, and the Greek is long of mind or soul. So just this idea that God bears with us and really just has patience.

Gwen Sellers

So, I mean, we've talked about God being holy and God being just, but as Nelson brought up earlier, I mean, he doesn't, like when Adam and Eve sinned, he didn't just say it's over. God was patient and he like made a way. And even as you think about the biblical narrative, just the unfolding of God's plan of redemption and like how long it takes, even the Israelites in the wilderness, you know, okay, now we're going to wait 40 years before you get to the promised lands. And why were they in Egypt for 400 years to begin with? Because God was being patient with the Amorites and their sin.

Gwen Sellers

And so to think about that with, wow, God is patient toward me personally, like in my journey of sanctification. And when I keep struggling with the same thing over and over and keep having to relearn the same lesson over and over, God isn't frustrated. He's not going to give up on me. He bears with me, but he does also train me and bring me along the way. So yeah, I mean, I think God's patience is really the only reason any of us are alive. So of course we should be grateful for that.

Nelson Domingues

Absolutely. I think about patience too. I think you hear the question a lot, like, you know, why is this so, why doesn't God just come today? Why doesn't he just end all the pain in the world? Why doesn't he just stop everything that's happening? Why does he allow this injustice in my life? Why does he allow things to happen here and there? And scripture says that we, and we know that we live in a world full of sinners who sin and that no good is going to come from that, right? And so we have to endure all these things.

Nelson Domingues

And, but why does God allow it to happen? And I think one of the answers points to God's patience. God doesn't wish that anyone should perish, but that all should reach repentance, right? That's what second Peter chapter three, verse nine says. And so he's being patient with us. Thank God we serve a patient God who is waiting and wanting to draw people into himself.

Nelson Domingues

And we look around and wonder why all these things are happening. Why doesn't he just quickly come? One of my children just asked me that question too. Like, why does he allow it to happen? Why doesn't he just come today? And like, we all do. We all wish that. But you realize the moment that he does, there is no more time for others to come to repentance. And while it looks good on our perspective to say, I want to go to heaven. I want to be done with this world of sin and pain. It's very difficult to say, I want their time to be done. For me not to be patient with someone else when I know even in my own life, God required to have patience for me to come to him, for me to let go of my sin, for me to come towards repentance, had I not gotten that time, had he come before then, I would have justifiably gone to hell. I would have justifiably been left in my sin. It wasn't his doing. It was my rebellion.

Thankfully, because of his patience and because of the people he used in my life and the scriptures that my eyes were opened and I saw the truth. It was that patience.

Nelson Domingues

And so we too are called to have patience with others as well. As we long to go to heaven, we at the same time are so thankful that God is being patient. He will one day, his patience will run out. This is not an attribute of his that will just continue on forever. Patience doesn't mean that you will put up with anything. Patience is not being a pushover. It just means there's a time that he's willing to not act accordingly as he should. He's being patient with each one of us.

Nelson Domingues

I love the description that God gives to Moses of himself. He says in Exodus chapter 34 verse 6, the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to

anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Praise God that he is slow to anger. It doesn't storm into our lives every time we mess up or trip up or sin, that he's patient even with us in my own small faults and failures up to my very large faults and failures as well. So yeah, his patience is an incredible thing to think about. And I think the longer we dwell on any of these attributes, the more we truly see how undeserving we are to experience them at all in our own lives.

Shea Houdmann

Both of you touched on it. And to me, when I think of God's patience, I also think of 2 Peter 3:9 in terms of people coming to faith, repentance, but also God's patience with me and sins, failures, mistakes, lack of understanding. It's like you see it in Jesus with the disciples sometimes. It's like, how is he not enraged the disciples still don't get it? It's because he's patient. How does God not instantly strike me down when I fail him in the same way for the thousandth time? It's because God is patient.

Shea Houdmann

So God's patience is one. It's such a comfort to me that he's not going to give up on me. He has a plan and he will continue to help me. But also it's like a motivation. It's like when someone is so patient with you, to me it's a motivation to I want to get this right. I want to overcome this sin. I don't want to continue struggling with this. I don't want to take advantage of God's mercy, grace, goodness, and patience. Instead, I want to live my life and out of gratitude for that. But, you know, the patience many, many times praying, Lord, thank you for being so patient with me because I mess up all the time, same ways over and over again. And to know that God is still there, still with me, still loving me, still being good, still showing me grace, it's all wrapped in with his patience. And that to me is tremendously powerful and encouraging.

Nelson Domingues

Something else to think about too is we are told as he described himself as being patient and scripture reminds us that he's patient as well is a patient person is a type of person who doesn't allow their emotions to just throw them from one side to the other like a light switch, right? You know, something happens and all of a sudden they can go from loving to enraged. That's not who our God is. He's not like the father who storms into a room who one second before had a different character, a different attitude to the next second, you know, even like a bipolar person or anything like that.

Nelson Domingues

Patience defines a person who is waiting, who's calm, who's contemplative, who understands the situation and takes time to understand the situation, who sits down with someone who's in the wrong and talks to them kindly and

compassionately. That's patience and that's our God. And that's an amazing thing to realize as well that he doesn't, he's not just this highly emotionally sensitive being. He is patient. Whichever attitude or whatever he decides to dole out on me at any point in time, if in fact he decides to enact discipline in my life, it hasn't been without a time of patience and a time of calling and a time of teaching and even during that time of discipline because he is patient, it is done with love and kindness and for the purpose to draw me back to him.

Gwen Sellers

Yeah, that's a great point. Shea, I think it's interesting how you brought up that God's patience actually can motivate us. And yeah, I think that's so true.

When we have that sense of freedom that we are loved and accepted and God is patient with us, it doesn't make us want to just like, oh great, like I can sin all the more. Instead, it really like connects us to the heart of God and makes us want to honor and to please him.

Gwen Sellers

And I think another thing it can do is help us be more patient toward others. When we really recognize and receive how patient God has been with us, I think we're more likely to Nelson, like what you're saying, give some people time and contemplate things, have some curiosity about what might be motivating their behaviors and not just respond with anger or frustration, but to allow them to grow and to allow ourselves to grow too.

Gwen Sellers

So yeah, I think patience, I think, especially in our world, we're so busy and everything faster and faster all the time. It's really hard to be patient just in general. But then I think sometimes that makes it extra hard to be patient with other people because we're so used. And even with ourselves, we just have this idea that everything should be instant gratification and change immediately, but it doesn't.

Gwen Sellers

The other kind of passage that comes to mind for me for patience, although it's not specifically related, is Hebrews 11. And just thinking all these people were so faithful. And then there's this verse of, but they died before the promise was complete because they knew that they were looking ahead to better things. God was waiting for you to make it complete. And so I think for us, kind of full circle back around to second Peter, when we're waiting, Jesus come quickly, that idea of, but we want redemption to be complete. And so wherever we are in the story, we wait for it expectantly, but also patiently. And kind of even back to the beginning, knowing that God is good and that he is gracious.

Shea Houdmann

I think all these attributes, as we look at, all the different attributes we've studied, it's been seeing how they relate to one another, how they impact one another. So God's mercy is patient. God's graciousness is good. God's love is merciful. All these things. It's not just, it's one thing. It's all of who God is. His patience, his justice goes along with his patience. And we're to be thankful for that. His righteousness goes on his patience. He's holy, but he's patient. You see all these things working together.

Shea Houdmann

Looking at like our agenda for today, our plan was to also discuss the wrath of God. And I don't know, are we going to give our audience whiplash to go from love, mercy, grace, goodness, patience, and now wrath? I think we need to save wrath for another episode because that's a really interesting topic to study. Because I was even looking at my favorite book on the attributes of God's knowing God by G.I. Packer. He lists God's wrath as an actual attribute, but let's stop today with patience because I think covering these attributes that flow so well together and then to jump from them to wrath, I think will be an interesting way to conclude an episode that otherwise was all about attributes that really connect and flow from into one another. So are you guys in for doing one more on the attributes of God?

Nelson Domingues

Yeah, that sounds great. And we can spend a little more time with that topic of wrath, which I think is a topic that most people need to understand better.

Gwen Sellers

Yes.

Shea Houdmann

Sounds good to me too. So Gwen and Nelson, thank you for joining me this conversation today on the grace of God, the goodness of God, the patience of God. All three of these attributes are a tremendous encouragement as it shows just how truly good and loving God is and how grateful we should be for how he relates to us in these attributes. So I hope our conversation today has been encouraging to you as we continue our series in the attributes of God.

Shea Houdmann

This has been the Got Questions podcast. Got questions? The Bible has answers and we'll help you find them.