

# Attributes of God - Grace, Mercy, Longsuffering and Goodness

by William MacDonald

---

*The sermon explores the attributes of God, specifically the grace, mercy, and long-suffering of God, and how these attributes should affect our lives.*

**Duration:** 37:04

**Scripture:** Exodus 34:6, Psalm 31:19, Psalm 52:1, Psalm 119:68, Nahum 1:3, Matthew 5:7, Luke 6:36, John 1:16, Romans 3:4, Romans 9:22, Romans 12:8, Romans 15:5, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Ephesians 2:8, 1 Peter 5:10

**Topics:** "Attributes of God"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the smallness of the earth in the vast universe, highlighting the insignificance of humanity in comparison. However, despite our sinful state, God showed incredible grace by sending his son Jesus to be born in Bethlehem and suffer on the cross for our salvation. The speaker lists numerous ways in which God has blessed and transformed believers, including indwelling them with the Holy Spirit and adopting them as his children. The sermon also emphasizes the importance of showing mercy, citing biblical verses that encourage believers to be merciful as God is merciful.

---

## Transcript

Now this afternoon we continue in our study of the attributes of God, and we come, first of all, to the grace of God. The grace of God. And I would like to expand the definition that is up there behind me this afternoon.

It says, I would like to expand it like this. God grants favor and acceptance to those who don't deserve it, who deserve the very opposite, but who trust the sinner's savior. Three parts to it.

God grants favor and acceptance to those who don't deserve it, who deserve the very opposite, but who trust the sinner's savior. There's a difference between God's grace and his mercy. We'll be looking at his mercy next.

God's grace is only for believers. His mercy is for all mankind. Now let's think of some verses of scripture.

I'm sure if I asked you for verses of scripture dealing with the grace of God that many would come to your mind. Let's just take a few. John chapter 1 verse 16.

The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Romans chapter 3 verse 4 says, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Second Corinthians 8 9. Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Of course, good old favorite Ephesians 2 8. For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God. And then I love that expression in 1 Peter 5 10. It says, God of all grace, isn't that nice? And that isn't all.

But the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory. That's enough to make angels gasp. The God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory.

Think of it this way. We were speaking the other day of the tremendous universe in which we live, right? Nobody knows the dimensions of it. As far as we know, it's, there are no bounds.

I called the Adler Planetarium in Chicago one day and said, and the man seemed, he didn't seem at all abashed or surprised by my, he said, I said, how far can you look out into space? And he said, 10 billion light years. And light years, the distance that light travels in a year, and they can look out 10 billion light years with telescopic vision. The world on which we are this earth, this planet on which we are is a speck of cosmic dust in the universe.

Really, it's not that it's not even that big, a speck of cosmic dust in the universe. If the earth on which we are sitting this afternoon is a speck of cosmic dust, how infinitesimal you and I are. Mark, God looked down and saw us lost in sin and degradation.

And he sent the son of his love down through all the planets to this earth to be born in Bethlehem and to go to the cross and suffer as you and I will never know for you and for me. It was marvelous grace. And he wasn't satisfied to save us from hell.

He lifted us up. He indwelt us by his Holy spirit. He could have done less.

He gave us the seal of the spirit. He gave us the earnest of the spirit. He redeemed us.

He reconciled us. He sanctified us. He justified us.

He received us as children in his family. We were adopted as mature adult sons. We received the anointing.

As a matter of fact, the moment we trusted Christ, 35 different things happened, matchless tokens of the grace of God. And is he through? No. His love and his grace will never be satisfied until we're with him in celestial glory.

The God of all grace who has destined us to eternal glory. No wonder Darby broke out in those matchless strains. And is it so? I shall be like thy son.

Is this the grace that he from me has won? Father of glory, thought beyond all thought, in glory to his own blessed likeness brought. Imagine worms associated with Jesus Christ in eternal glory. Amazing grace.

How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see.

The hymn writer thought that the grace of God was the greatest of all his attributes. Each of us this afternoon is allowed to make our choice. But he said, great God of wonders, all thy ways display thine attributes divine.

But the bright mysteries of thy grace above thine other glory shine. Who is a pardoning God like thee? Or who has grace so rich and free? We sang appropriately this morning, wonderful grace of Jesus greater than all my sin. And I'll tell you one of the grandest themes certainly that can occupy the human mind is the matchless grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we've mentioned right along that the contemplation of the attributes of God should have a practical effect in our lives. As I think of the grace of God, what effect does it have on me? I think like few other attributes of God, it makes me a worshiper. Just before the meeting, I turned once again to Ephesians chapter one, Ephesians chapter one, and I read those words, verse four, according as he has chosen us in him, that is in Christ, before the foundation of the world.

Just think of that for a moment. According as he, God, has chosen us in him, Christ, before the foundation of the world. What does that mean? Well, I'm a very simple believer, and I just take the Bible to mean what it says.

And I believe implicitly as I stand here this morning, that this afternoon, that before the foundation of the world, God chose me to belong to Christ. And I'll never know why. Because there are people in Minnesota today with better characters than mine.

People in Minnesota with better dispositions and temperaments than mine. And I'm on my way to heaven, and many of them, sad to say, are on their way to hell. And what can I do but adore the grace of God that would have ever stooped down to choose such a worthless person as I? Really, it just passes telling.

And not only does the contemplation of the grace of God make me a worshiper, but it makes me desire to know more of this in my own life. Grace. God wants his people to be gracious, not harsh.

There's enough harshness in the world already. The world is looking for this kind of grace that goes out to the unworthy and to the unlovely. And that type of behavior is worth more than a thousand arguments.

There's a camp in upstate New York. It's called the Word of Life Camp. It's run by Jack Wurtzen, Word of Life, our screw link.

One summer at a conference just like this one, there was a Christian brother came. And this brother had a very severe facial deformity, and it affected him so that when food went into his mouth, it didn't all stay. Some of it came back out.

It's not an uncommon thing, actually. And so, meal after meal, this brother would sit at a table, and of course, he had newspapers down in front of him because he only was able to eat a fraction of the meal that went into his mouth. And it oftentimes happened that he sat alone.

More often than not, he sat alone. Jack Wurtzen himself was often late coming to the meal. And when Jack would come in the door of the dining room, people from all over would wave to him and beckon him to come to their table.

Jack never did. He always went and sat with a brother that couldn't hold the food in his mouth. That was a reflection of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, wasn't it? A reflection of that matchless grace told out in his life.

You've heard of George Washington Carver, the black man who really made history in this country. When he was a young man, he was refused admission to a college because of his color. And later in life, the conversation came up one day, and somebody said to him, Mr. Carver, what was the name of that college? And he answered, it doesn't matter.

That's great. That's really great. When Lincoln was president of the United States, he had a man who was his sworn enemy.

His name was Stanton. Stanton said some very bitter and harsh things against Lincoln. He said there was no use going to Africa to look for a gorilla when the original gorilla was in Springfield, Illinois.

Later on in the war, Lincoln needed a minister of war, and he appointed Stanton because he said he was the man most fitted for the job. Stanton came by the night that Lincoln was shot, and he stood in the house where they had brought Lincoln's body, and he looked down, and he said, the greatest leader of men. Grace had conquered.

And God wants that grace to be shed abroad in our lives. Two women were talking, and one said to the other, don't you remember that mean thing she said about you? She said, not only don't I remember, I distinctly remember forgetting. Scripture says, let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.

They marveled at the gracious words that proceeded out of the lips of the Lord Jesus. Well, I tell you, as we contemplate the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we're changed into the same image, aren't we? Changed into the same image. We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed, the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

And so that brings us to the next attribute of God, which is spoken of as his mercy. And by the mercy of God, we mean that he has pity, loving kindness, and compassion on those who are in misery and distress. Those who are guilty, and in misery, and in distress.

The mercy of God. Now, oftentimes we use this word interchangeably with grace, but it really is different. Here are some verses having to do with the mercies, the mercy of God.

Psalms 136.1. Notice how oftentimes we go to the Psalms for the attributes of God. Psalm 136.1 says, his mercy endureth forever. It's a refrain.

His mercy endureth forever. In 2 Corinthians 1.3, God is called the Father of mercies. That's a lovely expression, the Father of mercies.

And Ephesians 2.4-5, but God who is rich in mercy, for his great love, for which he loved us. Wonderful. God is rich in many things.

Isn't it wonderful to think of him being rich in mercy? And then James 5.11 says, the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy. What effect does the contemplation of the mercy of God have on my life? Once again, it leads out my heart in praise to him. I come to that in Ephesians 2.4, but God who is rich in mercy.

And I realized I have found God's roadblock on man's way to hell. That's what it is. God's roadblock.

God looked down and saw me and I richly deserved to go to hell. And God had mercy and loving kindness and pity and compassion on me. And he devised a way where I could be righteously saved and delivered from going down there.

And then once again, God wants us to be conformed to his image, not only worship, but conformity. Matthew 5.7, blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Luke 6.36, be therefore merciful, even as your father also is merciful.

And then Romans 12.8, show mercy with cheerfulness. I was thinking this afternoon about this marvelous quality of mercy, and my mind went to a dear brother, a young brother on the West Coast. Some of you may know him.

His name is Paul Sandberg. Again, he's one of the assemblies in the LA area and he's the, or has been at least, the first tenor on the Haven of Rest program. Paul Sandberg has some lovely albums.

I just forget the names of them right now. One day Paul went into a little coffee shop and sat on the stool to have something to eat. And he began speaking to the man next to him.

Man's name was Freddy. He began speaking to me, found a soul in need. And Paul dealt with him and made arrangements to meet him.

And finally, Freddy trusted the Lord Jesus as his Savior. He was gloriously saved. And then Paul began to disciple him on a one-to-one basis.

And this dear man really began to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. And then he was struck with the news that he had cancer and it was terminal. And he didn't have any place to go, and that is, any home where he could be cared for.

So he went to, I suppose you'd call it a convalescent hospital. And it was really substandard, this particular hospital. And Paul used to go and visit him.

And Paul used to bathe Freddy. And he would change the sheets on the bed and do anything that the staff really should have been doing. This is Paul Sandberg, first tenor in the Haven of Rest Quartet.

The night Fred died, Paul was holding him in his arms, whispering verses of Scripture into his ear. Dear friends, that's mercy. That's really mercy.

What a wonderful thing to see that God-like quality in a human life. One night, I'll never forget one night in London years ago, I was speaking in Romans chapter 12 to a group of, I think it was a nurse's fellowship or something like that. And I came to that verse, show mercy with cheerfulness.

And I was really well, I confessed to the people that I just wondered what that verse meant, show mercy with cheerfulness. I came to that verse, show mercy with cheerfulness. And I was really well, I confessed to the people that I just wondered what that verse meant, show mercy with cheerfulness.

And a sister came up to me after and she said, I think I can tell you what that verse means. And I said, what does that mean? And she said, well, she said, I have an aged mother. And she said she was living alone, but she said the time came when she couldn't live alone any longer.

And so she said, I talked to my husband and she said, we decided to bring her into our house. She said, deep within my heart, I was kind of resentful because it really disturbed the routine of our house. She said, I cared for her.

I cooked her meals. I did her washing. I did everything for her.

But, but inside she said, I was showing mercy. She said, my mother used to say to me, why don't you smile anymore? You don't seem to be happy anymore. My sister said to me, I was showing mercy, but I wasn't doing it with cheerfulness.

You know, the demands of the Christian life are not difficult. They're impossible. It really takes supernatural power to live the Christian life, doesn't it? All the fruits of the spirit are supernatural.

They cannot, an unbeliever couldn't do it at all, period. A believer can't do it in his own strength. Only as empowered by the Holy Spirit of God.

But the Lord wants this characteristic in our lives as well. The mercy that he has shown to us. The next attribute of God we want to think about is the patience of God.

I think a good word to use here is long suffering. Long suffering or patience. This refers to his restraint and self-control in dealing with sin and rebellion.

The long suffering of God, his patience, his restraint and self-control in dealing with sin and rebellion. Let me just give you a few verses about mercy. Exodus chapter 34 and verse 6. Exodus 34, 6. The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious.

Nahum chapter 1 verse 3. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power. Romans 9.22. What if God endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? And then Romans chapter, that was Romans 9.22. Romans chapter 15 verse 5. It speaks of the God of patience. The God of patience.

His restraint and self-control in dealing with sin and rebellion. Now this really means for us the ability to bear up patiently and triumphantly under the aggravations of life. You think of the long-suffering of God.

You think of what's going on in the world today. You think of the gross sin that's all about us. God places man down here and man makes a tremendous colossal mess of the whole thing.

Turns his back on God and just flails his fist in the face of God. And every basic foundational principle that God has set up man is defying it today. Did God give headship to the man? Human race is against it today.

Did God ordain capital punishment? Human race is against it today. Did God establish morality in giving the law? Anything goes today. Premarital sex, legalized prostitution, homosexuality, and all the rest.

And then the crowning sin, the rejection of God's beloved son. If you and I were God, what do you think we'd do? Well, I think we'd just take our hand and just wipe the human race off the face of the earth. And God could have done it.

God could have done it. But he's not willing that any should perish. God is long-suffering.

He's delaying the day of judgment so that men and women might come to the pierced feet of the Lord Jesus. Wonderful, wonderful Lord. And he wants his long-suffering to be reproduced in us.

He doesn't want us to be quick-tempered. He doesn't want us to fly off the handle. He doesn't want us to try to get even.

He wants us to display a kind of conquering patience. And every one of us should ask the Lord to reproduce this patience within us, that we might be patient with one another. I was interested in reading a Kari Ten Boom's book, you know, she and Betsy, her sister, were there in a concentration camp, and they were really suffering indescribable pain and indignity.

And Betsy used to say to Kari, Kari, when we get out of here, we've got to do something for these people. She didn't say, we've got to do something to these people. She said, we've got to do something for these people.

And Kari kept thinking that Betsy was referring to their fellow prisoners there. She wasn't referring to them at all. She was referring to those who were persecuting them.

And Kari, when she describes this, she writes this, she says, and I wondered, not for the first time, what sort of a person she was, this sister of mine. What kind of road she followed, which I trudged beside her on the all-too-solid earth. Meaning that she was walking with a sister who was treading a heavenly pathway, while Kari was walking down on the earth, not rising above flesh and blood.

But the road Betsy followed was the road of long suffering, and Kari walked it too, in spite of her humble statement. Long suffering, God wants to see us long suffering. You know, I really think that a subject that we've neglected in the church today is the story of the Christian martyrs.

The Christian martyrs give us lessons on how to bear up under the aggravations of life, and especially from when we speak of long suffering, it's not so much with the circumstances of life as the aggravations that other people bring upon us. I was brought up in a Scottish home, and my mother used to feed us on the stories of the martyrs. I remember a calendar in our kitchen, and the calendar was from the story of John Brown.

John Brown was a faithful, devoted Christian who was suffering for his loyalty to Christ, at a time the Christians were being persecuted, and he had to leave home, he had to leave his wife and children, and he was hiding out in the moors, in the dens, in the caves, in the woods, and he scarcely dared come home for fear Claverhouse and his men would swoop in and capture him. One time he had to come home, he had to come home to get clothes and to get provisions, and while he was there in his house, Claverhouse did arrive with his men, and this picture in our kitchen had Claverhouse and his men there, and John Brown and his wife and the children clinging to her apron. Claverhouse ordered one of his men to kill John Brown, and a man looked at him and thought he saw the face of an angel and he couldn't kill him.

So then Claverhouse took the sword himself and did away with John Brown, and then he said to Mrs. Brown, what do you think of your husband now? And she said in the broad scotch, she said, I always thought a great deal of him, but I never thought more of him than I do now. Long-suffering, eh? I love the story of that old bishop in England who was put under pressure, he was threatened if he did not recant his faithfulness and loyalty to Christ that he'd be burned at the stake, and at first he was able to hold out, but then as time went on he finally took the pen in his right hand and he signed the recantation, and he had no

sooner signed it than he realized he had done wrong. And he called the men and he said, my hand signed it, but my heart was not in it.

They said, if you don't stick to it, they said, we'll burn you at the stake, and he said, go ahead with the burning. And so the thing was prepared, the stake was prepared, and the fire was started. And they asked him before, they put him in the fire, if he had any last request, and he said, yes, all I ask is that you untie my hand.

And they untied his hands, and he walked over and held his right hand in the flame and said, perish this unworthy hand. He wanted it to be the first part of him to burn, because he had signed the recantation denying his Lord. We don't know much about long-suffering doing in this country.

You might like to get sometime Fox's Book of the Martyrs, read some of these stories and read the price that men and women down through the years have paid for their faith. One other that comes to my mind that I've always appreciated, a young girl there in Scotland, and she was put under enormous pressure to denounce the Lord, and she wouldn't do it. And so they told her that they put her to death, and they had rather a novel way of putting to death.

When the tide went out, they drove a stake in the sand, and they would tie her to the stake so that when the tide came in, she would be drowned, but very gradually. And just to put, her parents came out on unbended knee, they begged her to do as the men asked her to do. She wouldn't flinch.

So just to add to her pressure, they took another stake further out in the tide, and they tied an old Christian woman to it. And they said when Margaret sees her die, she'll change her mind. And so the two women were tied to the stake, so the tide began to come in.

Margaret said, God can give an old woman grace to die for Christ. He can give grace to me to die for Christ. And as the tide came in and covered her mouth, she was quoting the last part of Romans chapter 8. Long suffering.

Patience. In God's case, his restraint and self-control in dealing with sin and rebellion. In our case, triumphant bearing up under the aggravations of life.

Perhaps we'll just look at the next one here, and that is the goodness of God. One of the attributes of God is his goodness. And here we say he is benevolent and kind and never originates evil.

This morning, Brother Jay read over the PA system as we got up. The Lord is good. His mercy is everlasting, and his truth endures to all generations.

That I was sharing with him today. You know, that's beautiful. The Lord is good.

All monosyllables. A lot of our young men and older men too, they're afraid to get up in the worship meeting because they're afraid they can't say something flowery enough. Well, that's not too flowery, is it? It's part of the sacred scriptures.

The Lord is good. When you've said it, you've said a lot. Let me share some verses with you on the goodness of God.

Psalms 31, 19. You'll like this. Oh, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men.

Psalm 52, 1. The goodness of God endureth continually. Psalm 119, 68. Thou art good and doest good.

I like Nahum 1, 7. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him. And don't think when you see other Christians prospering, you're tempted to say, you say, oh, the Lord is good to you, meaning he's not good to me. Psalm 145, verse 9 says, the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

You know, the goodness of God is manifested in nature, isn't it? I hope I never become too spiritual to see the goodness of God in nature, because it's all around us. The goodness of God is seen in the seasons of the year, which we take so much for granted, don't we? You know, ho-hum, what else is new? But it's the goodness of God seen in the seasons. The goodness of God is seen in his his treatment of the wicked and the way he allows them to prosper.

This was a riddle to the psalmist one time. But God sends the rain on the farms of the unsaved, just as well as on the farms of the saved, doesn't he? The goodness of God seen in allowing the wicked to prosper, and he's kind to them, of course, in order to lead them to repentance. What should the contemplation of the goodness of God do in my life? Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

You know, I sometimes wish this were a discussion period, and some of you who are experts in certain fields could really discuss the goodness of God. He could have made all our food like sawdust, couldn't he? Could have just as nutritional, you know, but not very enjoyable. But he didn't do that.

Remember that when you eat your supper tonight, the goodness of God in the variety. And not only that, but the color of the food. You know, sometimes you sit down and there's the carrots with their lovely color, and the green beans, and really it's beautiful.

Starts the saliva flowing before you ever start eating, really. The goodness of God is seen in all of those things. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

And then finally, we should be good too, also to others. We should be friendly, kind, benevolent, tender-hearted, forgiving, considerate, gentle, and hospitable. Godly means God-like, doesn't it? And I suppose that our English word God comes from the word good, don't you think? God is good.

He wants us to demonstrate goodness in our lives as well. Shall we pray? Lord, we've told it out now, we would pray it in. Father, we feel so convicted to even stand here and talk about these things and realize how we fail in our lives day by day.

Oh, Father, when we think of the wonderful grace that you've shown to us, we pray that in some small measure it might be reproduced in our lives. Help us too to show mercy with cheerfulness. Lord, teach us lessons in long suffering, not living somehow, but triumphantly.

And then teach us goodness in our practical everyday life. We ask it in the Savior's worthy name and for his sake. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-macdonald/attributes-of-god-grace-mercy-longsuffering-and-goodness/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**