

Qualities of God - Mercy

Mercy is the quality that causes God to be actively compassionate. Ephesians 2:4 describes God as being "...rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us." The quality and quantity of that mercy can only be observed, in full measure, within the written Word of God. We can see healing from disease and experience peace of mind, but the merciful escape from sin and eternal death can only be observed by faith.

Mercy, like love and grace, is part of who God is. The expressed desire of God for all is written in 1 Timothy 2:4, where Paul speaks of God, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." But unlike His love and grace, His mercy is limited to only those He chooses. Paul referred to a statement God made to Moses, "'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.'" So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy" (Romans 9:15-16). Fortunately, He has told us, through His word, who will receive His mercy, "And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation" (Luke 1:50).

In the Old Testament He said; "...I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments" (Exodus 20:5-6).

In his letter to Titus, Paul reaffirms that it is not by our works that we are saved but "according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit..." (Titus 3:5). Peter also writes of God's mercy given to those born again. 1 Peter 1:3-5 reads, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you..."

Since God has provided everything for our salvation, including the sacrifice of His son, all we must do is accept and conform to His desire. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). The Hebrew writer encourages us to come to Him and obey. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

The alternative is too horrible to think about. We are reminded of those who rejected God's love, grace, and mercy in the past. The northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed and Judah was sent into captivity. Note this reminder: "Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:28-29).

The admonition of James to conduct ourselves according to the word of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ also reminds us of the consequences of rejecting the gospel. "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:12-13).

Judgment says "the wages of sin is death." But mercy says, "the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23).

- That gift, by God's mercy, is given to those who have discarded the world and put on Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).
- It is a gift that makes it possible to do what God wants us to do. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

We see then that as God's love, grace and mercy are offered to us, He expects something in return. As He loves us, we are to love Him and others. As He gives gifts of grace, we show our thanks by doing

good for others. And as He has been merciful to us, we grow more like His son by working in His kingdom as faithful children.