

GOD'S MERCY

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”



Readings: Psalm 103

The 103rd Psalm is one of those very special messages of comfort from the Word of God. There is a wonderful definition of the extent of God's mercy to us. We read in this Psalm:

“He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” (v 10-12)

Along with these comforting words, which indicate that there is no limit to God's mercy, the Psalmist clearly points out that there are factors which qualify the distribution of that compassion.

Amazing Grace

It is consistent with our nature that we place great emphasis on the mercy of God and avoid any concentration on our own obligations.

We like the idea of “Amazing Grace.” We depend on a loving God, who will accept us just as we are, and who will extend unlimited mercy to us, no matter how much of a “wretch” we may be.

Human nature is prone to sin. We are easily convinced that it is not possible for us to effectively resist sin, and therefore we become totally dependent on the full extension of God's mercy.

God's Mercy in Psalm 103

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; ...Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;.....The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.” (see verses 1-8)

Qualifiers to Mercy

As we read these words of comfort, we should also make note of these highlighted qualifiers:

“For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.....Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him..... But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;.....To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. (see verses 11,13,17,18)

Yes, God is merciful beyond our comprehension. The question is: Are we fulfilling our part of the deal, as indicated in these qualifying words from Psalm 103?

Things Concerning

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“NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE BE DONE.”

READINGS: Luke 22:39-46

The words of our Master, quoted above, were spoken during the time of his greatest trial. He was struggling to overcome the natural desire of his flesh to stay alive. His will was that another way be found for the process of redemption, so that he would not have to be the sacrificial lamb that would take away the sin of the world.

Tears and Suffering

We are told that he offered up “strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death.” (see Hebrews 5:7-8)

His agony was so severe that his sweat came down like great drops of blood, and yet through all of this pain, he was still willing “to learn obedience by the things which he suffered.”

Strengthened by an angel, he prayed even more earnestly. He endured the trial, and was able to say with conviction: “**nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.**”

Christ's Example

Christ led the way for us through his willing sacrifice. He overcame the temptation of his flesh and gained the victory over death through his faith and obedience..

It was not possible for the grave to hold this righteous man, and on the third day, through the power of God, he was brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant. (see Heb 13:20)

God's Will

His example demonstrated a principle for all those who desire to be saved from eternal death, through his blood.. Not my will, but thine be done.

This principle is one that should guide all of us in our own struggle with the sinful desires of the flesh. It is not about doing the things that we want to do, to satisfy our own will. “Not my will”, but God's will should control our lives.

Man's Will

The will of man is to follow the natural instincts. These are described by John as “ the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” (1 John 2: 15-17)

God's Will

In Christ Jesus, we are encouraged to learn the will of God. His will and His purpose for this earth is outlined in His word.

Jesus told us that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matt 4:4)

The Psalmist offered the key, and Jesus used it: “ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” (Psalm 119:11)

Our lives are filled with choices. Each day we face challenges and decisions. If we rely on God's word for our answers, and pray for His help, as Jesus did, we may find the strength to do the will of God also.

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“ I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy”

God’s Will in His Mercy

We have talked about doing the will of God. Jesus was our example in placing God’s will above his own desires.

“Not my will, but thine be done”, is the principle that should guide our lives.

There is another related principle that we must learn concerning God’s mercy. It is God’s will that determines who will receive mercy, and not ours.

Popular Belief?

It is a popular idea among Christians that God is a loving and merciful God and that His mercy is something that is guaranteed for all who accept Christ as their Savior. Unfortunately, this idea is a great exaggeration of the truth about God’s mercy, as it is taught in the Bible.

Mercy on Whom I Will

The phrase quoted at the top of this page is taken from Romans 9: 15. When we consider the context of these words, we will see that there are two sides to the story of mercy.

God has mercy on some, but not others. It is His choice. It is **His will** that rules.

Jacob Have I loved

We are all familiar with the story of Joseph and his coat of many colors. He was favored by his father Jacob above his brethren.

Jacob, on the other hand, was not the firstborn, and his father Isaac preferred Esau, Jacob’s twin brother.

But God loved Jacob and hated Esau. Why did God

choose to bless Jacob before he and his brother were even born? (See Romans 9: 10-16)



It may be difficult for some to understand why God chose to show His mercy on Jacob and not Esau. This difficulty can only be overcome with an appreciation for the power of our Creator.

Foreknowledge

God has perfect knowledge. He can see into the future, and he knows what each one of us will do with the opportunities that we have in this life.

He knew that Esau would be a profane person, who would sell his birthright for a morsel of meat. (see Hebrews 12: 14-17) He also knew that Jacob would honor Him with his substance. (see Genesis 28: 20-22).

Because of His foreknowledge of how these children would turn out, God was righteous in proclaiming before their birth that he would have mercy on Jacob.

JACOB HAVE I LOVED. BUT ESAU HAVE I HATED.

This principle of God using His foreknowledge is demonstrated in the life of Abraham. God said: “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD.” (See Gen 18:17-19)

God’s Will / God’s Mercy

The important thing for us to remember is that we have been given a wonderful opportunity to receive God’s mercy. Let us make the very best of the hope that we have. If we sincerely honor God with our lives, it may be His will to bless us.

FREE WILL !

God is a loving Creator who has given us the freedom to exercise our own will.

This is another very important principle for us to appreciate as we consider both **the will of God, and our own will**.

God does not force any of us to worship Him, nor does He prevent any from doing so.

He does not want individuals who are “puppets on a string.” He wants individuals who have a free choice, and who choose to serve and obey Him.

Life and Death

He has provided us with a simple choice. We can choose **life or death**. It may seem an easy matter. Who would choose to die when they can live. But countless millions choose the way of death.

“ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matt 7:13-14)

Life is the only logical choice, but there is a complication. We actually enjoy those things that lead to death, often more than we do the things that would lead to life.

Our nature is prone to sin, and we are born with a lust for the things of this world. These things will lead only to the grave.

Free Will

God has given us the freedom to choose between life and death. He allows us to exercise that choice. He has no pleasure in seeing men choose death, and He would prefer that we accept His offer of life.

He wants us to exercise our free will in a positive way, and He provides us with abundant opportunity to do so.

God is longsuffering, and He extends His mercy unto us to help us make the right choices in our lives.

“ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

Character

The goodness of God leads us to repentance. He provides us with ample opportunity to use our free will in His service. He wants us to develop a character that demonstrates Godliness.

The freedom to choose His Word has provided us all with the opportunity to develop faith. As we learn more about His will, we should increase in a desire to exercise our own free will to draw nigh to Him. Hopefully, it will be our choice to add to our faith those characteristics that will glorify Him. (see 2 Peter 1: 5-11)

To Him that Overcometh

In his messages to the ecclesias in Asia, (in Revelation 2 and 3) Jesus repeated the phrase often, “ to him that overcometh.” This requirement is linked to the way to the tree of life, and to other great promises.

Jesus exercised his free will and overcame the temptations of the flesh. We have the freedom of will to make this same choice.

We can choose life, or we can choose death. **Let us use our free will to overcome**, that we may honor and glorify God, choosing the life that He has offered.

Jesus taught us to pray **the Lord’s prayer**. We all know the words. Did we ever consider that as we pray, we are asking for God’s will to be done? “ **THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE, IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**”

God’s will and His glory will fill this earth. We have the opportunity to be a part of that glory, and we can do our part now, by coordinating our own free will with the revealed will of God.

THY WILL BE DONE