

Psalm 116:5

God is Merciful

Open your Bible to...

Ps. 116:5 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful.

Pray

Intro

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Thomas Watson, the Puritan preacher in the 17th Century knew something about mercy.

He had been imprisoned for his part in a plot to overthrow Parliamentary rule in England with the goal of restoring the monarchy...

...and as a result, he was scheduled to be decapitated as was Christopher Love, the leader of the plot!

However, rather than being executed for his part in the rebellion he was released after petitioning Parliament for mercy. Later he testified...

“Mercy sweetens all God's other attributes. God's holiness without mercy, and his justice without mercy were terrible. When the water was bitter, and Israel could not drink, Moses cast a tree into the waters, and then they were made sweet. How bitter and dreadful were the other attributes of God, did not mercy

sweeten them! Mercy sets God's power on work to help us; it makes his justice become our friend; it shall avenge our quarrels."

Indeed, where would any of us be without God's mercy in our lives!

God is Merciful ~ a definition

✓ God is Merciful

Mercy has often been described as...

"Not getting what our sin deserves."

Which is certainly true. However, the expression of God's mercy in the Bible is also demonstrated to His people through His...

Compassion
Kindness
Goodness
Pity
Forgiveness

Perhaps the most dramatic example of God's mercy is seen in His dealings with king David's many sins, including his...

Adultery with Bathsheba

Orchestrating the death of her husband to cover his sin

Under the Law of Moses both of those sins were capital offences (ref. Leviticus 20:10 & Exodus 21:12)...

...of which the Law provided no atoning sacrifice.

So, we might have expected that David would have been stoned to death as the Law required for his great transgressions!

But the biblical account tells us that God showered David with mercy as recounted in 2 Samuel 12:13 when the prophet Nathan said...

“...the Lord has (has) put away your sin; you shall not die.”

That is, David did not get what his sins deserved. Later under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit David sang about how he petitioned God for mercy singing...

*“Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.”*
Psalm 51:1

Additionally, it's important to understand that when we speak of God's mercy the Bible tells us that mercy is not just something God does...like put away David's sins...

...it is Who He is!

That is, mercy is His essential nature and character which is exhibited in our lives when God...

...has pity on our broken condition, shows us compassion when we're in need, and grants us forgiveness for our trespasses when we acknowledge our sins.

Praise the Lord that God is merciful for if He were not, it is likely that none of us would be here this morning!

✓ God's Mercy

When we talk about God's mercy there are some who would contend that God's mercy is not a unique attribute of His nature, but rather they claim it is just an expression of His love.

However, I reject that position because when the Bible describes the attribute of God's love...

...as it does in 1 Corinthians 13, and Galatians 5 it does not list mercy as a characteristic or expression of His love.

So, I would suggest that while mercy is closely related to God's love it is still a unique attribute of God's eternal character.

I'm certainly not alone in that assessment as great theologians and Bible teachers like Norman Geisler and A.W. Tozer agree.

For example, Tozer wrote...

"Mercy is not something God has, but something God is...it is not a temporary mood but an attribute of God's eternal being."

More importantly God Himself affirms that mercy is a unique attribute of His nature as we see in Exodus when Moses saw the glory of God passing before him and heard the divine voice declare...

"The Lord, the Lord God, (is) merciful..."
Exodus 34:6

Therefore, I believe the Bible makes it clear that mercy is a unique attribute of God's eternal character.

The Biblical Foundation that God's Mercy

✓ Mercy is a major theme of scripture

As we look through the Bible, we discover that God's mercy is a major theme of the scripture.

For example, the word mercy is mentioned some 276 times in the NKJV translation of the Bible...

...the word merciful another 35 times, and God's mercies are spoken of an additional 39 times...for a grand total of 350 occurrences of some form of the word mercy on the pages of scripture!

To give you some perspective God's wrath—the very opposite of God's mercy is mentioned 197 times in God's Word, while even grace is only mentioned 146 times...

...clearly then based on the oft repeated expression of His mercy we can conclude that God loves to extend His mercy to any who would receive it.

Obviously, we won't look at all 350 scriptures that speak of God's mercy, however...

I'd like to share the following examples so that you can be confident that it is God's desire and plan for you to experience His mercies new every morning!

We begin with David's testimony in Psalm 145:9 where we read...

*“The Lord is good to all, and His tender
mercies are over all His works.”*

Did you hear that? David tells us that God is good to all, and that His tender mercies are over all of His works...

...His works, which include His greatest creation—Mankind!

That is, David is telling us that while none of us deserve the least of God’s mercy nonetheless it is His inclination to extend mercy to everyone.

Jesus confirmed David’s revelation when He taught that God...

*“...makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good,
and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”
Matthew 5:45b*

So, David, and more importantly Jesus, make it clear that it is God’s nature to extend a measure of His mercy to all people...

...as seen in His merciful provision of sunshine and rain by which He provides us with the food we daily need.

Ex. God hasn’t yet wiped out the human race!

Think about it...we are all born sinners, separated from God by our relationship to Adam.

If God were not inclined to be merciful to all, then He would have destroyed the human race the moment that Adam and Eve sinned!

The fact that He hasn’t but rather gives each of the opportunity to be born and to live so that we might come

to know Him and receive His forgiveness through Christ is testimony that God is merciful!

However, while even the sinner can experience a measure of God's mercy through God's provision of the sun and rain and all that is necessary to sustain us with food.

Nonetheless since we are all born in sin the wrath of God is hanging over our heads.

The only escape from God's wrath is found in the special mercy of God that is available only through a relationship with Christ.

That's what Isaiah was communicating when he wrote...

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Isaiah 55:7

Only those who reject His loving, merciful provision for salvation will experience God's eternal wrath.

Further examples of God's mercy in the Bible can be found even in the Law, where Moses tells us...

"(the Lord your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them."

Deuteronomy 4:31

Here, Moses makes the point that God's mercy is an integral part of the Covenant that He made with Israel.

A Covenant that Israel has continually violated over the last 3,500 years...

...yet, because God is merciful, He will not forsake the Jewish people but will remain faithful to fulfill the promises that He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to establish a people for Himself.

Next, we return to our opening text where the Psalmist proclaims...

*“Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our
God is merciful.”
Psalm 116:5*

Once more affirming the fact that mercy is intrinsic to God's character...

Not just something He does, or something He has, but something He is.

Finally, we look to the New Testament where Paul tells his friends at Ephesus...

*“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...”
Ephesians 2:4-5*

Notice here that it is God's abundant mercy...

...that moves Him to give us who believe in Jesus new life in Christ.

So, we can rest assured that God is merciful to all and that we can experience His special mercy new every morning through a personal relationship with Christ Jesus...

...the One who is the very embodiment of God's mercy!

The Implications of God's Mercy

✓ The implication of God's Mercy

Now that we have a biblical foundation upon which we understand the mercy of God...

...we want to spend a few moments considering the practical implications of His mercy in our lives.

1) God's mercy triumphs over judgement

Because God's inclination is to be merciful, He is free to choose not to inflict the punishment upon us that our sins deserve—as James tells us...

"Mercy triumphs over judgment."

James 2:13b

James reminds us that while we deserve judgment nonetheless God gives us mercy!

While this is true, and we're thankful for the victory of mercy over judgment...

...nonetheless the punishment for our sin is still due.

That is to say, the punishment for our sin is not erased by God's mercy because God's justice demands that every sin be punished.

For if His justice is not satisfied, then He would no longer be perfect.

In other words, God's mercy does not allow Him to simply look the other way when we sin.

Nor does it mean that He can ignore our sin as it is a violation and offence against His perfect justice and righteousness!

Therefore, to maintain His perfection God has chosen to satisfy the just demands of His righteousness by sending His own Son...

The perfect sinless God/Man to pay the debt that our sins have incurred so that we can experience His mercy rather than continuing to live under His wrath.

Peter says it this way...

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"

1Peter 1:3

Peter is telling us that mercy is what motivated God to provide the means our salvation...so that He could extend forgiveness to each of us without impugning His perfect character, such that His forgiveness covers...

Every sin committed from that first bite of the forbidden fruit in the Garden...

...to the last sin committed in the Satanic rebellion recorded in Revelation 20.

Thus, God's mercy provided through Jesus' sacrifice is adequate to provide forgiveness for all sinners, but is only effective for those sinners who trust in Christ...

...that is, God's mercy and escape from God's wrath and judgment is available to everyone, but only those who put their faith in Jesus will experience it.

Ap. Make sure you're one of the people who experience His mercy!

2) God's mercy is everlasting

I find it entertaining to hear some Christians complain about the repetition sometimes found in modern worship songs.

I chuckle because God seems to like repetition as seen in the lyrics of the divinely inspired songs recorded in Scripture.

I think He uses repetition because we often need to hear a truth more than once before we believe, act upon it, and live it out in our lives!

For example, to make sure that we know that God's mercy is everlasting the first verse of Psalm 136 declares...

*"Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!
For His mercy endures forever..."*

And then the Holy Spirit repeats the refrain...

“For His mercy endures forever.”

26 times—once for every stanza of the Psalm!

Talk about repetition!

Clearly God isn't opposed to the use of repetition in worship songs most likely because He wants us to apprehend and never forget the truth that His mercy endures forever!

- 3) Next, I call your attention to the prophet Jeremiah who also tells us that we cannot exhaust the mercy of God!

*“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end; they are
new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”
Lamentations 3:22-23 ESV*

Like God Himself, Who is everlasting (eternal) so too God's mercy does not have a beginning in time...

...nor will His mercy ever cease to be for mercy has been and will always be a part of His eternal character!

Thus, because God's mercy is eternal none of us who have trusted in Christ will ever be able to wear out God's compassion!

There is no sin that is beyond the reach of His infinite mercy as expressed through His benevolence, pity and forgiveness.

Charles Spurgeon, sometimes called the Prince of Preachers, conveyed the eternal and inexhaustible nature of God's mercy with these words...

“God’s mercy is so great that you may sooner drain the sea of its water, or deprive the sun of its light, or make space too narrow, than diminish the great mercy of God.”

Friends the only limitation to God’s mercy is that which we put upon Him by our own stubborn resistance and refusal to receive it!

Thus, Paul’s sober warning in Romans 1 that informs us that...

...there a line that men can cross after which God will give them up to their “uncleanness”, “vile passions”, and “a debased mind”.

A line from which there is no return...

...not because God’s mercy has failed, nor been exhausted, but because the person who continually reject’s God mercy will so harden his or her heart that they become incapable of receiving His mercy.

Ex. Pharoah

Pharoah hardened his heart to the Lord, and then the Lord hardened his heart in accordance with Pharoah’s free choice to reject God’s mercy.

Ap. Don’t harden your heart!

If you are not a believer this morning, please don’t continue to harden your heart toward God and the mercy He wants to lavish upon you...

...lest like Pharoah and the wicked people described in the first chapter of Romans you move to a place where God must give you over to the sin that you've chosen over His mercy.

4) God's mercy moves Him to chase down the sinner

In the Gospel of Matthew we read that the Pharisees were offended that Jesus associated with sinners. In response Jesus challenged them to study their Bibles, He said...

"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Matthew 9:13

The Lord's point was that the Pharisees were just like the rebellious house of Judah during the life of Hosea whom He quoted...

Because they focused all their attention and activity on performing the letter of the Law—the sacrifice...

...all the while missing the spirit in which the Law was given—God's heart of mercy to provide sacrifice by which restore sinners could be restored to fellowship with Him.

The point is that the blood of the animal sacrifices demanded by the Law was to point the Jews to God's greatest act of mercy...

...the provision of His own Son, the Lamb of God, by whose blood we could have our sins forgiven and our fellowship restored to God.

The author of Hebrews says it this way...

“But Christ came as High Priest... with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”

Hebrews 9:11 & 12

The point is that it is God's mercy that motivated Him to send His Son from Heaven to earth that He might pursue sinners like those who ate with Jesus...

...and you and me, and to call us to repentance so that we might be restored to a right relationship with God.

The Blessings & Benefits of God's Mercy

√ Blessings & Benefits

- 1) Because God is merciful, the sins of believers are not counted against them!

In Revelation 20 we read the terrifying account of the final judgement of the wicked who rejected the mercy of God found in Christ during their lives on earth...

Rev. 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

Rev. 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Rev. 20:13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Rev. 20:14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Rev. 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Verses 12 & 13 tell us that the wicked dead are judged according to their works recorded in books in Heaven.

That is, the lives of those who rejected God's mercy are now judged by their works.

Not as to whether they have earned the right to enter heaven because God has made it clear that no one can work their way to heaven.

Rather, they are judged by their works to determine the degree of punishment they will receive in the Lake of Fire for all of eternity.

John tells us that the only people who will escape the Lake of Fire are those whose names are written in the Book of Life.

Back to the wicked at the White Throne Judgment. Can you imagine the desperation of each person who will be called to account for their works...

The resurrected wicked standing before that Great White Throne waiting in vain as a search is made for their name in the Book of Life!

But all the while knowing that their name will not be found recorded there because they had rejected Christ during their life on earth.

Because their name is not found in the Book of Life they will be judged by their works as documented in the other books kept in Heaven...

Where every word, every deed, every secret sin, every internet search, and their entire life has been meticulously recorded and is now exposed to the Righteous Judge.

There is only one sentence for the wicked...everyone who has rejected Christ will be cast into the Lake of Fire that Jesus described as a place where...

“Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.” ~ Mark 9:44

And if, like the apostle John we will be watching the proceedings of that Great White Throne we may very well stop and consider our own sins that we committed while on earth...

...whether great or small, each deserving of the same punishment as the wicked!

And acknowledge that it is only by the mercies of God in Christ that we are forgiven our sins so that we do not get what we deserve...

...the Lake of Fire!

And we'll bow in thanksgiving and acknowledge that it is by the mercy of God that the books that once contained a record of all of our sins have been erased! Paul puts it this way...

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary

*to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having
nailed it to the cross.”*

Colossians 2:13-14

Praise God that the only book in Heaven that records our names is the Book of Life that declares our records have been purged and the perfect righteousness of Christ has been inputted to our account!

- 2) God gives greater mercy to those who serve

You’ve probably noticed that the apostle Paul begins each of his letters to churches with the salutation...

“Grace and peace”

Bible students suggest that Paul’s salutation...

Grace reminds us of the means by which we are saved, and of the spiritual gifts we are given for Christian service.

While peace refers to that inner tranquility that we experience in Christ now that we are no longer at war with God.

However, in Paul’s letters to young pastors he adds to that standard salutation the word mercy. For example, in 1Timothy 1:2 he writes.

*“To Timothy, a true son in the
faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our
Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

We believe that the apostle added the benediction of God’s mercy to Timothy and Titus, and all who serve Him...

...because of how easily God's servants can be overwhelmed by the work and responsibility of the ministry.

Ex. Timothy and Titus

Timothy was pastoring a contentious church in Ephesus, and in a city that was hostile to the Christian faith and given over to the worship of the false goddess Artemis...

A church filled with argumentative members, many of which were teaching false doctrines...

...all of which would have required Timothy's direct intervention which surely brought conflict into the church and his life.

Titus on the other hand was commissioned with the difficult task of finishing the work that Paul began on the island Crete...

Appointing elders in the church while trying to motivate the people in the church to get serious about their faith...

...people who were infamous throughout the Empire for being lazy, liars and gluttons!

The point is that the work of the ministry was and is hard, and as Paul knew could often times seem futile with little or no visible evidence of any progress...

...so, he prayed that Timothy and Titus would experience God's mercy to strengthen them for the ministry.

Ap. God's mercy for ministers

In view of the difficulty of ministry, the increased spiritual attacks upon those who serve God, and sometimes the lack of appreciation from those that God's ministers serve...

God has provided a special dispensation of His mercy!

Mercy that provides God's compassionate care, protection and provision for the servant of God who is prone to discouragement, and who is often overwhelmed by a deep sense of failure in the ministry.

Mercy is what keeps the pastor, the children's ministry teacher, the sound technician and all of God's servants going...

It is that special mercy—His empathy provided through Jesus that reminds us that He understands what we're feeling because He too experienced the same things during His earthly ministry.

And that He is well equipped by His divine nature and His human experience to help us in our times of need.

God's mercy is more than enough to breath fresh courage into our timid hearts so that we might keep at it, continue to show up, and to finish well the race that He has called us to run!

Close

✓ God is Merciful

In view of how great the mercy of God is we ought to ask ourselves...

"How should I respond to all of the mercy that God has poured out in my life?"

Fortunately, we don't have to guess the correct response, rather Jesus told us...

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” ~ Matthew 5:7

As we’ve already established God’s mercy cannot be earned, so we must take care not to interpret Jesus’ words to mean that God’s mercy is only available to those who are merciful.

Rather, Jesus is encouraging us to extend to others the same mercy that we have received.

That just as God has expressed His mercy to us through His...

Compassionate care of us, so we should look for opportunities to demonstrate the mercy of God in practical ways by feeding the hungry and clothing the poor.

Just as God has expressed His mercy to us through His ...

Kindness to us, so too we must learn not to retaliate against those who are hurtful to us, but rather we should return good for evil so that the Holy Spirit can convict their heart.

Just as God has expressed His mercy to us through His...

Pity on us, we also ought to have our eyes open to those who are suffering and do what we are able to lift their burden and to encourage them as they navigate life.

And, finally just as God has expressed His mercy to us through His...

Forgiveness, we also must guard our hearts from holding onto any bitterness toward others and instead forgive their sins against us just as Jesus has forgiven us.

We do so because we want to be like Jesus who we’re told is...

*“Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our
God is merciful.”*

Psalm 116:5

May we be agents of God’s mercy in a hurtful and cruel world!