

The Mercy of God

Introduction:

1. There is certainly a need for balance in the idea that we need to look at the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).
 - a. Over the past few months we have looked at various doctrines that have been taken to an extreme (faith, grace, and works).
 - b. Thus, we see the need for a balanced approach while we remember that in certain ways, Christianity is extreme.
2. Another area or study that is often taken to an extreme is the nature or attributes of God.
 - a. Some might focus on the love of God (see John 3:16).
 - b. While other might see God’s wrath (see Romans 1:18).
3. Again, we notice that both characteristics of God have a biblical foundation but we can also see that man has taken both to an extreme. Imagine the difference:
 - a. A person that is reared in a congregation that focuses extremely on the goodness, love, mercy, and kindness of God.
 - b. A person that is raised on Hellfire. He is reared in the church but the congregation focuses on the justice, wrath, and anger of God.
4. Today, we are going to look at three attributes of God:
 - a. God’s mercy.
 - b. God’s love.
 - c. God justice.
 - d. God is the perfect culmination of all three.

I. Mercy defined.

- A. One person distinguished between mercy and grace by defining each as follows:
 1. Grace is getting something that you do not deserve.
 2. Mercy is not getting something that you do deserve.
 3. While these definitions are subtly different, often times, the New Testament uses the terms grace and mercy interchangeably.
 - a. In Romans 5:20-21, the word grace is used like we defined mercy.
 - b. In Titus 3:5, the word mercy is used like we defined grace.
 - c. These definitions are a good place to start, but we see that God encompasses both grace and mercy and we see that they go together as a package deal.
- B. Often times, God’s mercy is pitted against God’s wrath.
 1. God is good and severe (Romans 11:22).
 2. The point is it must be possible to be just or angry and still be loving and merciful.
 - a. This is illustrated well in John 2:13-25.
 - b. Also, the Bible never condemns anger but rather regulates it (Psalm 4:4, Ephesians 4:26).
 3. The practice of making one characteristic of God greater than another is the danger here.
 - a. The Bible does not emphasize one over the other.
 - b. Further, this practice essentially makes God an inconsistent God which we certainly know is not true (Deuteronomy 32:4).

- C. Obviously, mercy is an outgrowth of God's love. God loves us and sent His Son which is illustrative of His mercy.
 - D. God's mercy is:
 1. Everlasting (Psalm 100:5).
 2. Great (Psalm 108:4).
 3. Good (Psalm 109:21).
 4. Shown (Hosea 2:1).
 5. Conditional (Luke 1:50).
- II. Mercy defended.
- A. As seen previously, God's mercy and justice are not in contradiction. In fact, God's mercy toward each of us individually is dependent upon our mercy to others.
 - B. Matthew 7:1-5.
 1. We can certainly allow God to judge (John 7:24).
 2. The context of Matthew 7 is that we do not judge hypocritically.
 3. Notice, specifically verse 2.
 - C. We also understand that mercy can be defended in light of God's justice or wrath in that God's mercy has an end.
 1. He is a longsuffering God (2Peter 3:9).
 2. One day His longsuffering will run out.
 3. This is illustrated again and again in the prophets of the Old Testament.
 - D. Finally, God's mercy is defended in that God's mercy is conditional.
 1. This is most vividly seen in Luke 1:50.
 2. Yet, we are to be merciful if we are to obtain God's mercy (Matthew 18:23-35).
 3. This will be seen in further detail in the next point.
- III. Mercy demanded.
- A. Another aspect of this study should focus on the fact that God requires His followers to be merciful.
 - B. Certainly, this is seen in the fact that we are to be like God and Christ (Philippians 2:5, John 13:15).
 - C. There are also some very specific passages that show us the consequences of not being merciful:
 1. Matthew 5:7.
 2. Matthew 18:23-35.
 3. James 2:13.
 - D. Remember the characteristics of God's mercy mentioned in the first major point of this lesson. One more that can be added is that God is 'rich in mercy' taken from Ephesians 2:4.

Conclusion:

1. The mercy of God is a quality for which each and every Christian can be thankful.
 - a. It relieves us of the horror of eternal death.
 - b. It ultimately gives us the hope of Heaven.
2. The mercy of God is something that coincides in a very good way with the justice and wrath of God.
3. Finally, the mercy of God is a quality that each of us should imitate as it is a conditional quality.