

The Attributes of God

Attribute #17 – Compassion

Part 1

- I. Compassion - God displays His love through a tender, personal, and eternal interest.

- A. 1 Chron.16: 34,41; 2 Chron.5: 13; 7:3,6,14;
- B. Ezra 3:11;
- C. Psalm 89:1-2; 136:1-26
- D. For this reason, he is addressed as “the father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Cor.1: 3).

2. In the Bible it is a divine as well as a human quality. The word is often translated ‘pity’ or ‘spare’ and ‘mercy’ or ‘tender mercies’ respectively. Thus compassion, pity and mercy can be regarded as synonyms.

- A. In the NT the most frequent words are translated by ‘have compassion’, ‘have mercy’ and ‘have pity’, and ‘mercy’.
- B. The prophets and other men of God were deeply aware of the wonder of God’s mercy to sinful men.

- 1. They taught that anyone who had experienced this would feel it his duty to have compassion on his fellow men, especially the fatherless, the widow, and the foreigner and those in poverty and the afflicted.

- a. Deut. 10:18; 14:29; 16:11; 24:19;
- b. Jer. 22:3
- c. Ps. 146:9; Job. 6:14;
- d. Pr. 19:17; Zech. 7:9-10
- e. Micah. 6:8

2. There is no doubt from the frequent references in Deuteronomy that God expected his people to show compassion not only to each other but also to foreigners who lived among them.

- a. Through the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, especially in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10), it is clear that compassion is to be shown by his disciples to anyone who needs their help.
- b. It is to be like His, not only in being without respect of persons, but also in that it is expressed in deeds (1 John. 3:17), which may involve personal sacrifice.

3. Qualities of God's compassion or mercy
 - a. It is eternal – Psalm 103:17
 - b. It is boundless – Psalm 108:4
 - c. It prolongs life – Lam. 3:22-23
 - d. It encourages repentance – Joel 2:13
 - e. It forgives sin – Micah 7:18
 - f. It makes salvation possible – Titus 3:5

C. Compassion and Mercy

1. Christ set an example of - Luke 19:41,42.
2. Exhortation to be compassionate - Romans 12:15; 1 Peter 3:8.
3. Exercise compassion towards
 - a. The afflicted - Job 6:14; Heb 13:3.
 - b. The chastened - Isaiah 22:4; Jer 9:1.
 - c. Enemies - Psalm 35:13.
 - d. The poor - Prov. 19:17.
 - e. The weak - 2 Co 11:29; Gal. 6:2.
 - f. Saints - 1 Co 12:25,26.
4. Compassion is inseparable from love to God - 1 John 3:17; John 4:20.
5. Motives to be compassionate
 - a. The compassion of God - Matt 13:27,33.
 - b. The sense of our infirmities - Heb. 5:2.
6. The wicked made to feel compassion, for saints - Psalm 106:46.
7. Promise to those who show compassion - Prov. 19:17; Mt 10:42.
8. Compassion illustrated - Luke 10:33; 15:20.
9. Compassion exemplified in -
 - a. Pharaoh's daughter - Exod. 2:6.
 - b. Shobi - 2 Sa 17:27-29.
 - c. Elijah - 1 Kings 17:18,19.
 - d. Nehemiah - Neh. 1:4.
 - e. Job's friends - Job 2:11.
 - f. Job - Job 30:25.
 - g. David - Psalm 35:13,14.
 - h. Jews - John 11:19.
 - i. Paul - 1 Co 9:22.1

3. Marks of True Human Compassion

- A. Benevolence – Isaiah 58:7
- B. Helpfulness – Acts 20:35
- C. Burden-bearing – Romans 15:1; Gal. 6:2; Col.3: 12
- D. Concern for the unfortunate – Heb. 15:3
- E. Visitation of the needy – James 1:27

Part 2 – Compassion (Mercy)

1. Compassion (Mercy) - God displays His love through a tender, personal, and eternal interest. It is the ready inclination of God to relieve the misery of fallen creatures.

- A. What is the difference between grace and compassion or mercy?

1. Consider God's dealing with the unfallen angels.
 - a. He never exercised mercy to them for they were in no need of it because they never sinned or came under the effects of the curse.
 - b. Yet they are objects of His free and sovereign grace.
 - 1). His election of them out of the whole angelic race (1 Tim.5:21)
 - 2). His preservation of them from apostasy when Satan fell and took 1/3 of the angelic host with him (Rev. 12:4)
 - 3). In making Christ their Head (Col.2:10; 1 Peter 3:22) and are thereby eternally secure in the holy condition in which they were created.
 - 4). Because of the exalted position which has been assigned to them, to live in God's immediate presence (Dan. 7:10). and to serve Him.
 - 5). To receive honorable instructions from Him (Heb. 1:14).
 - c. This is abundant grace, but it is not mercy; mercy presupposes sin.

- B. Understanding compassion (mercy) biblically.

1. There is *general* mercy, which is extended to all people, believers and unbelievers, as well as all of creation.
 - a. Psalm 145:9
 - b. Acts 17:25
2. There is *special* mercy, which is extended to all people, not withstanding their sin, communicating all the necessities of life.

- a. Matt. 5:45
 - b. Isaiah 27:11 – only in this life
- 3. There is *sovereign* mercy, which is reserved for the heirs of salvation, communicated to them through the Mediator, Christ (I Tim. 1:14-16; Titus 3:5-6).
- 4. There is a difference between mercy as a quality of His divine essence and the exercise of His mercy.
 - a. Psalm 136:1 – essence
 - b. Psalm 116:5 – essence
 - c. Romans 9:15 – exercised sovereignly; God is not influenced by things outside of Himself as we are. Meriting mercy is a contradiction (Titus 3:5)

II. The Exercise of Compassion (Mercy)

- A. The punishment of the wicked must be viewed from three different perspectives.
 - 1. From God's view, it is an act of *justice*
 - 2. From the sinner's view, it is an act of *equity* (due reward for iniquities).
 - 3. From the redeemed's view, it is an act of *mercy* (Rev. 21:17) – not to be exposed to sin any longer; free from the presence of sin (glorification).
 - a. Psalm 143:12
 - b. Psalm 136:15
 - c. Rev. 19:1-3
- B. The properties of compassion (mercy)
 - 1. God showing mercy reveals His glory – Exod. 33:19; 34:6; 2 Cor. 1:3
 - 2. It is free and spontaneous – to set up merit is to destroy mercy (Hosea 14:4). We can force God to punish us but not to love us
 - 3. Election is free of merit – Eph. 1:4
 - 4. Justification is free of merit – Rom. 3:24
 - 5. It is powerful – it softens the heart of stone; the law may terrify but mercy mollifies; it allures us then conquers us (Mark 15:40; Luke 8:2; John 19:25)

III. Applications (uses) of this attribute

- A. Do not despair because God is slow to anger and ready to forgive (Psalm 103:8; Psalm 86:5)
- B. Hope in God's mercy – Psalm 147:11
- C. Get to know God's mercy – Psalm 59:17
- D. Pray for His mercy – Psalm 85:7; Psalm 25:16