

## A Father's Pity

**Introduction:** When Moses asked to see God's glory, God placed him in the cleft of the rock and as He passed by, "*proclaimed His name.*" God's name is a description of His character. He is *the LORD (JEHOVAH) God*. He is also "*merciful and gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; ... but by no means clearing the guilty.*" (Ex. 34:5-7). These are things God wanted mankind to know about Him.

**First, as "*the LORD, the LORD God,*" He revealed He is eternal – "*from everlasting to everlasting.*" (Ps. 90:2; 103:17). Unlike everything else in this age of change, decay, aging and death, God will never change. (Mal. 3:6). Second, how He wants us to understand His feelings toward His fallen children. In spite of our weaknesses and sins, He will always be "*merciful*" (feelings of tender pity with a desire to help) "*and gracious,*" (a joyous desire to give us the gifts of forgiveness and salvation we do not deserve.) He is "*longsuffering,*" and "*forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.*" These are the foundations of His unchanging character. These is how God feels about every one of those born to Adam and Eve. Even those who are "*chief of sinners,*" "*by nature children of wrath,*" and "*enemies*" are all treated the same after "*repentance*" and "*obedience.*" Yet in spite of these refreshing attributes, He warned: "*I will not clear the guilty.*"**

**His character resonates throughout the Scriptures.** As Paul summed it up. "*Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God.*" (Rom. 11:22-23) At the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, and Israel in apostasy, we see only severity. They were guilty, had rejected all God's efforts to repent, and could no longer be cleared of their guilt and its punishment. But for Noah, Lot, Abraham and all those who are submissive, obedient and humble we see His goodness, including mercy, grace, longsuffering, and forgiveness.

God showed mercy to the most corrupt and rebellious if they showed any sign of remorse, humility or repentance.

**Ahab "*sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord,*" and "*behaved very abominably in following idols.*"** Yet when God saw, "*Ahab has humbled himself before Me*" He showed His mercy and longsuffering saying: "*Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days.*" (1Kings 21:25-29). He later sent Amos and Hosea in hopes of never having to bring the calamity at all.

**Although Manasseh "*seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel*"** God was longsuffering: "*the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen,*" Then came severity: "*the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon.*" Yet even in captivity, with all hope gone, when he showed remorse and humility, God gave mercy and longsuffering to him: "*when he was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly.*" He also "*prayed to Him*" and God "*heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom.*" This is the quality of goodness, mercy, and forgiveness God will show to all who repent regardless of the depths of their sin and rebellion. (2Chr. 33:1-13).

**Before Paul became a Christian, "*he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison,*" and "*punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.*"** "*I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man.*" Yet God and Christ showed both longsuffering and mercy. He is still "*a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.*" (Acts 8:3; 26:11; 1Tim. 1:13-16).

**In one of the inspired songs (Psalms 103), the Holy Spirit took the words God spoke to Moses and revealed their fulness.** While some may have hesitated at how far we could expect God's mercy, grace, longsuffering and forgiveness to be taken, the Holy Spirit revealed they go far further than we can even imagine. *"He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy."*

God's mercy is limitless! *"For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him."*

**The full extent of this emotion is revealed when all efforts to save the ten tribes had failed.** They had rejected all the prophets sent to warn them. Yet even after their idolatry, murder, adultery and the sacrificing of their infant children, God still felt mercy. Far from wrath and judgment, He still spoke of His heart still churning, His sympathy stirred and His mercy holding Him back from the punishment they deserved.

*"How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. 9 I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst; And I will not come with terror. (Hos. 11:6-9)*

**As far as forgiveness. It too is limitless!** *"As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us."* Although, since we can remember, we might feel like God is still remembering them as well, that is false. He has removed them and they are forgiven. Jesus later spoke of seventy time seven and seven times in a day. As He later said in Jeremiah. *"For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."* (Jer 31:34)

**Among the most comforting and easy to understand are the words:** *As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him."* Jesus gave the parable of the prodigal son to show how far we can take these words (Lk 15:11-32). Like all God's children who take the precious gifts God has given and squander them on sin, this son took all his father had prepared for him and squandered it in doing evil. *"And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living."* It was not until there was nothing left and he found himself in the depths of poverty and humiliation that he came to his senses.

**He grasped the extent of his folly, repented and made the decision to confess what he had done.** *"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."* While even his own brother could not find it in his heart to forgive this folly and rebellion, his father pitied him. *"But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."* This is the compassion of God. Not wanting anyone to perish but for all to come to repentance and for all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

The concrete examples of this attitude are seen in several

**Conclusion:** God will do everything possible to save us! His mercy, grace, compassion, pity, longsuffering and forgiveness are the true emotions God feels toward those who have fallen into sin.

*17 But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, 18 To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them. Ps 103:15-18*