

KNOW GOD : Merciful

As one considers the characteristics of God, they begin to know Him in a more personal way. In this series of bulletin articles on knowing God, we have made an effort to look closely at the qualities of the one true God of heaven that we all might get to know Him better. It is important to know God as the book of Job 18:21 states, "Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him who does not know God." If you do not know the one true God of heaven, learn of Him today.

In our last article we considered that God is impartial and desires that all men are saved from sin. Today we want to examine the mercy of God. The Bible says in Psalm 116:5, "Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes, our God is compassionate." We see the mercy of God in the simple fact that we were lost in sin and He made provisions for our salvation. God now calls us to become like Him. In Luke 6:36, we are admonished "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." It is worthwhile for us to make sure that we understand how our God is merciful, so that we can demonstrate His mercy in our lives. In Psalm 145:8-9, we read, "The LORD is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and great in loving-kindness. The LORD is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works."

GOD IS MERCIFUL

The mercy of God has been bestowed upon man since the foundation of the world. Since the time that the first man and woman committed sin, God has shown His mercy to every generation by continually promising to forgive us. In Deuteronomy 4:31, the Bible reminds us of how God remembers His covenant with man in saying, "For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them." Even when man defiled the law of God in any generation, God has provided a means of remission for their trespasses. The Bible describes this as the loving-kindness of God. In Exodus 34:6-7, it is recorded, "Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving-kindness and truth; who keeps loving-kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave {the guilty} unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.'" Notice here, that just because God is merciful, doesn't mean that He will not punish the sinful. There seems to be a thought process in some who think that since God is merciful, He could never punish someone. God's mercy actually calls for such a punishment if individuals are not repenting and turning to Him for mercy and forgiveness. While God cares for all people, in the judgment, the unrighteous will receive punishment and the righteous eternal life. A good passage to illustrate this is in Matthew 5:44-45, where it is written, "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on {the} evil and {the} good, and sends rain on {the} righteous and {the} unrighteous." Paul wrote in Romans 2:4, "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" God's mercy

should never be used as a springboard for more sin, but should rather be used as a motivation for repenting and living our lives for Him.

Man was lost and there was nothing that he could do to save himself. It is only by the mercy of God that we are saved. Titus received a letter that said, “But when the kindness of God our Savior and {His} love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to {the} hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:4-7)

There is a particular story in the Bible that captures the mercy of God at it's finest. In Luke 15:11-24 we learn about a wayward son that returns home, not to an angered Father, but to a loving Father with outstretched arms. The account states, “And He said, ‘A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.’ So he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving {anything} to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.’ So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion {for him} and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate.” Just when you would expect the Father to be angry and punish His son, we see the mercy of God in outstretched arms and a kiss with a celebration to follow. This should speak volumes to our hearts. If you are astray, it should be obvious to you at this point that the Father is ready to hug and kiss you and celebrate your return to Him. The Bible in that same chapter says, “I tell you that in the same way, there will be {more} joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” (Luke 15:7). Because God has shown this wonderful mercy to us we ought to desire to serve Him faithfully. Paul makes this argument and admonition in Romans 12:1-2, where he wrote, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, {which is} your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” Are you living in the mercy of God? Have you realized the kindness of God

and returned to Him from your sins? If we can assist you in accepting the mercy of God through obedience to His word, please contact us and let us know your needs and desires.