

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
GOD THE FATHER
PART 5

This morning we are in part 5 of our study on God the Father and I realize that for some, this may be difficult for you, but as I have said, I believe this is very important to our Christian life. Maybe you have heard someone say or maybe you have said it yourself, “They are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good!” And maybe on the surface, that sounds great, it sounds right, but it isn’t. You see, I don’t believe you can be any earthly good until you are heavenly minded! And think about it, how many of you feel you are so heavenly minded you don’t need to think about it anymore? None of us are that heavenly minded, in fact, we desire to be more heavenly minded and as we draw close to God, as we seek Him more and more, then it is His attributes that come flowing from our lives, it is the fruit of the Spirit that manifests itself in our lives and thus, we become earthly good or we are able to minister to people the way that God desires us to!

In our previous studies on God the Father we have looked at his natural attributes or those things that are only associated with God and not with any of His creation including mankind. We looked at the existence of God, we saw that He is omniscient or all knowing, that He is omnipresent or His presence fills the universe, we saw that He is omnipotent or that He is all powerful, we saw that He is eternal or that He has no beginning or end and we saw that He is immutable or that God is unchanging! Again, we are not God and thus, we don’t possess any of these natural attributes of God.

We then began looking at the moral attributes of God and yes, we can never manifest them with perfection as God does, it is just His nature, but we can manifest them as God desires as we walk in the Spirit and not the flesh! Paul, in Galatians 5:16-25 compares what the works of the flesh are like to that of the fruit of the Spirit as he tells us, **“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”**

I guess the question would be, “Are you working or walking?” In other words, as a Christian, the fruit of the Spirit should flow from your life as you walk in faith but you can work out the flesh, you can go contrary to what your new nature is, and thus, the flesh will manifest itself! As Paul said, **“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”** May we walk and let the fruit of God’s Spirit flow through our lives and thus, be so heavenly minded that we are earthly good!

Now, so far in our study on the moral attributes of God we have looked at His holiness and saw that God wants us to be holy as He is holy. We have looked at His justice or righteousness and also saw that as we live out our faith God wants us to do so in justice or righteousness. And we looked at His love, which is unending and if you want to know what love is about you look to Him. Thus, He wants that Agape love, the unconditional love to flow from our lives as it flows from His! This morning we will continue our study looking at the moral attributes of God!

2. MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

D. MERCY

Mercy is another attribute of God. Now, when I think of this word, “mercy” I see it meaning that we are *NOT* getting what we deserve. I realize that many people feel they are entitled to many things but in God’s economy, we deserve *DEATH* and because of God’s great mercy that He bestows upon us, we get life! Now don’t think that mercy and goodness are the same thing, not at all. In goodness it demands the exercise of justice while mercy asks that justice be set aside. Think of it like this. Justice treats every individual the same, according to his actions or what he has done. But mercy treats the sinner very differently from what he deserves to be treated. Thus, for mercy to be exercised, there must be guilt for without guilt, without sin, there could be no mercy. And, as the Bible tells us, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, there are none righteous, no, not one! So we all fit into this condition of sinners and to receive the penalty for our sin, *DEATH!* Let me show you what I mean from these words from A. W. Tozer. He wrote,

When through the blood of the everlasting covenant we children of the shadows reach at last our home in the light, we shall have a thousand strings to our harps, but the sweetest may well be the one tuned to sound forth most perfectly the mercy of God.

For what right will we have to be there? Did we not by our sins take part in that unholy rebellion which rashly sought to dethrone the glorious King of creation? And did we not in times past walk according to the course of this world, according to the evil prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience? And did we not all once live in the lusts of our flesh? And were we not by nature the children of wrath, even as others? But we who were one time enemies and alienated in our minds through wicked works shall then see God face to face and His name shall be in our foreheads. We who earned banishment shall enjoy communion; we who deserve the pains of hell shall know the bliss of heaven. And all through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us.

- A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 90

When you really think about it, we all are doomed for eternal separation from God, but God's mercy is so great that it causes Him to help the miserable. It is as Psalm 86:5 tells us, "**For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.**" Also, in Psalm 51:1-2 we are told, "**Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.**"

Now here is the problem. If God just forgives our sins, then He is not a righteous God, He is not a good God, He is not a holy God. Thus, how can God extend mercy to fallen man, not giving man what He deserves, *DEATH* or *ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD?*

Let me share a few Scriptures with you and then I will expound on them. And as you listen to what we are being told in these Scriptures, you will see how God can extend mercy to people who do not deserve it and still remain holy and righteous in all that He does.

The first Scripture is found in Hebrews 2:17 where we are told, “**Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.**” Then, in I John 2:2 we are told, “**And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**” And in I John 4:10 we are told, “**In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**”

And lastly, in Romans 3:21-26 where we are told, **“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”**

The focus here is this word, **“propitiation”** and what it means to us. This word, from a purely human perspective, speaks of appeasing someone who is angry and that was done, many times, with a gift! That is not what this word is speaking of, not from a Biblical perspective. This word, from a Biblical perspective, means the satisfying of God’s holy Law. You see, it speaks of His just demands were met. His just demands, they were satisfied. And thus, because of that God can freely forgive those who come to Him through Christ, He can extend His mercy to them and still be holy and just!

Look at these verses we have just read. First of all in Hebrews 2:17 we are told that Jesus is our High Priest and what did the High Priest do? He made intercession for the people before God, he, in a sense, brought them to God. And in I John 2:2 John tells us that Jesus was the propitiation for our sins and not only ours, but for the entire worlds sins! Now, let me give you this illustration and then I will show you how some have taken this verse here in I John to a wrong conclusion. We are told,

In the archives of the United States Supreme Court is the Record of George Wilson, a man sentenced to die by hanging for a crime he had committed. His case came before President Andrew Jackson, who granted Wilson a pardon. To everyone's amazement, Wilson tore the pardon to shreds and threw it on the floor of his prison cell.

The ensuing legal argument concerned the validity of a pardon that was refused, and the question arose as to whether or not Wilson should be freed or hanged. After great deliberation, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled as follows: "A pardon is a writing, the value of which is dependent upon the acceptance by the individual for whom it is intended." It was therefore decreed by the court that George Wilson be hanged until dead – not because a pardon was not offered, but because it was not accepted.

This is a perfect picture of the sinner who hears the gospel of Jesus Christ, knows that God has written a pardon for him, yet rejects Him and thus forfeits his right to the pardon. If you are without the Savior today, it is because you choose to be. Your choice to reject Jesus Christ automatically invalidates your pardon and sentences you to the lake of fire.

- Tim LaHaye, Bible Prophecy, What You Need To Know

Now there are some who have a problem with that illustration because John tells us that Jesus was the propitiation for the whole world's sins. Let me share these words with you and as you listen, you can almost be taken in by what he is saying but as you will see, they just don't make sense. We are told,

Have you ever heard an illustration like this? A man is spending his last week on death row. Suddenly the warden appears and shows him a piece of paper. The paper is a full pardon signed by the Governor. After the man looks it over, he says, "I don't want it." He hands it back to the warden. The illustration ends with the execution of the condemned man. What's wrong with this story? Well, to begin with, there is no way a state would execute a pardoned man. The prisoner would be ushered unceremoniously out of his cell - at least eventually, depending on legal technicalities. Yet users of such an illustration think it is a good one. If human beings reject the pardon Jesus Christ bought for them by His death on the cross, they will go to hell and pay for their sins. Can this be true? No, it cannot.

. . . But is there anything in 1 John 2:2 about Jesus Christ being *potentially* the "satisfaction" for the sins of the world? No, there is not. The Apostle flatly states that *Jesus is the propitiation* for the sins of "the whole world." He *is* that. Not that He *can* be, or *potentially* is, but He simply *is*. Note, too, that this statement is exactly parallel to the truth that He is the propitiation for *our* sins. In whatever sense He is the propitiation for *our* sins, He is also the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

Very simply put, the propitiatory work of our Lord Jesus Christ is *universally* effective. That is true whether anyone believes it or not. On the cross, Jesus paid for every single sin that has ever been committed by any person who has ever lived on the face of the earth. That is magnificent and overwhelming!

. . . Since Christ effectively died for the sins of the entire world, nobody goes to hell for their sins. They go to hell because they do not have eternal life.

. . . When we sing, “Jesus paid it all,” we mean it. God does not exact from any man the judicial penalty that Jesus paid at the cross. Jesus Christ’s completely sufficient suffering on the cross for the sins of the world will never be repeated in the case of any human being whatsoever.

- Zane C. Hodges, WHAT DO WE MEAN BY *PROPITIATION*? DOES IT ONLY COUNT IF WE ACCEPT IT?

I am sorry, but I don’t agree with what he is saying here. Yes, Jesus paid in full the penalty for all our sins, but there is more to it than just that. First of all, Jesus said in John 8:24, **“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”** In other words, if you reject Jesus being God, then you will die in your sins! You see, if you don’t appropriate the free gift of Christ into your life, you will pay the penalty for your sins. Yes, the gift is there, but if you do not partake of it, you will be cast into the Lake of Fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, where the worm does not die nor is the fire quenched! I think the Scriptures are clear on that. He paid in full the penalty for our sins, but you must appropriate that into your life by faith in Christ!

You see, Jesus, by His death, became the substitute sacrifice for us. He became our propitiation. When He hung on the cross of Calvary He was judged in our place as the sins of the world were cast upon Him. Thus, the Father could demonstrate His righteousness in judgment against sin while sparing us who deserve His judgment! He can extend His mercy to us and still be holy and righteous.

It is as Clark said: “Here we learn that God designed to give the most evident displays of both his justice and mercy. Of his justice, in requiring a sacrifice, and absolutely refusing to give the salvation to a lost world in any other way; and of his mercy, in providing THE sacrifice which his justice required.”

Folks, God said that the only place where He would meet with man was at the Mercy Seat after the blood was applied and now Jesus has become our Mercy Seat and His shed blood gives us access to the Father, the atonement has been made. You see, apart from Christ we cannot approach God the Father. That is not what I have said, it is what Jesus said, “. . . ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” John 14:6.

Thus, the propitiation solves the problem of being rightful objects of God’s wrath for as Jesus bore our sins on the cross of Calvary, He also took the wrath of God that was due you and me. That is love in action! That is His mercy extended to us without God compromising who He is!

But some still may have this question: “How can a righteous God, a just God, justify a sinner and still be just?” That is a good question and the answer is simple. Jesus died in our place, he was the substitute for us and thus, God can justify sinners and still be just because the penalty for sin was paid for by Jesus!

Now what does it mean in Romans 3:25 where it says that “God had passed over the sins that were previously committed”? He is speaking of those who were saved before Jesus went to the cross of Calvary. You see, the Old Testament saints were saved by credit you might say. They were not saved by the sacrifices they made, but by their faith!

What do I mean by that? The Old Testament saints died in the faith, looking forward to the coming Messiah and thus, Jesus saved them on that basis, knowing that His work would make full expiation or compensation for their sins. That is how they were saved, not by the works of the flesh, not by keeping the Law but by believing in the coming Messiah and He saved them on that basis only!

God did not accept their works of righteousness back then and He still doesn't today. Let me explain it like this with this story. We are told:

It is an insult to God to try to add anything to Christ's finished work. What if a boy was swimming in a lake one day, and began yelling for help. Another young man on shore ran to the water and swam out to rescue the first fellow. In the process of saving the life of the boy who was drowning, the young man lost his life. The two families, who had been observing all of this, were overwhelmed by the unexpected turn of events. The father of the youth who had been saved approached the father of the dead young man to offer his sympathy. "I really can't express how much I appreciate what your boy did, and how sorry I am that he lost his life. But I just happen to have \$1.83 on me, and want to offer this to you as an indication of my feelings."

- Source Unknown

I think you get the point. By adding anything to the finished work of Christ you are not only cheapening the work but it is an insult to Christ. I wonder how many people see it that way, those that think they can work their way into Heaven? Obviously they don't see it that way or they would not insult Christ by their actions of a salvation by works! Thus, God can extend His mercy to us and still be holy and righteous, as I have said!

This word “**propitiation**” in the Greek is HILASTERION, (hil-as-tay'-ree-on) and it is used in the Septuagint for the Mercy Seat, which was the lid that covered the Ark of the Covenant where the Law of God was kept. And on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood of a goat upon the Mercy Seat to atone for the sins of the people, we see that in Leviticus 16:15-16, where we are told, “**Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.**”

Now keep in mind that during this feast there were two goats. The one we read about that was sacrificed and his blood sprinkled over the Mercy Seat and the second goat, he was spared. Again in Leviticus chapter 16, we are told in verses 21 to 23, **“Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. Then Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of meeting, shall take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the Holy Place, and shall leave them there.”**

You see, the high priest would place his hand on the head of this goat and the sins of the people were confessed upon the goat and then he was released into the wilderness never to be seen again. It is as Psalm 103:12 tells us, **“As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.”**

Here is the problem. Those Old Testament sacrifices could never take away your sins; they only covered them for a time. In fact, they were never meant to take away the sins for good, to cast them as far as the east is from the west, they were to point the people to the Messiah, to Jesus! You see, this was a picture of what Jesus would come to do, the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world and by His finished work our sins have been cast as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more!

You see, Jesus has come to be that perfect sacrifice and to take away, not cover our sins. It is as Isaiah 53:4-6 tells us, **“Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”**

The Bible tells us that God’s mercies are new every morning and that is great for me and I am sure for you because we need a new, a fresh start every morning with the Lord. His mercy never ends, He never runs out, He never gets tired of extending His mercy to us, it just flows from Him. Listen to what A. W. Tozer said regarding the mercy of God,

Mercy is an attribute of God, and infinite and inexhaustible energy within the divine nature which disposes God to be actively compassionate. Both the Old and New Testaments proclaim the mercy of God, but the old has more than four times as much to say about it as the New.

We should banish from our minds forever the common but erroneous notion that justice and judgment characterize the God of Israel, while mercy and grace belong to the Lord of the Church. Actually there is in principle no difference between the Old Testament and the New. In the New Testament Scriptures there is a fuller development of redemptive truth, but one God speaks in both dispensations, and what He speaks agrees with what He is. Wherever and whenever God appears to men, He acts like Himself. Whether in the Garden of Eden or the Garden of Gethsemane, God is merciful as well as just. He has always dealt in mercy with mankind and will always deal in justice when His mercy is despised. Thus, He did in antediluvian times; thus when Christ walked among men; thus He is doing today and will continue always to do for no other reason than that He is God.

If we could remember that the divine mercy is not a temporary mood but an attribute of God's eternal being, we would no longer fear that it will someday cease to be. Mercy never began to be, but from eternity was; so it will never cease to be. It will never be more since it is itself infinite; and it will never be less because the infinite cannot suffer diminution [reduction]. Nothing that has occurred or will occur in heaven or earth or hell can change the tender mercies of God. Forever His mercy stands, a boundless, overwhelming immensity of divine pity and compassion.

As judgment is God's justice confronting moral inequity, so mercy is the goodness of God confronting human suffering and guilt. Were there no guilt in the world, no pain and not tears, God would yet be infinitely merciful; but His mercy might well remain hidden in His heart, unknown to the created universe. No voice would be raised to celebrate the mercy by which none felt the need. It is human misery and sin that call forth the divine mercy. . . .

We may plead for mercy for a lifetime in unbelief, and at the end of your days be still no more than sadly hopeful that we shall somewhere, sometime, receive it. This is to starve to death just outside the banquet hall in which we have been warmly invited. Or we may, if we will, lay hold on the mercy of God by faith, enter the hall, and sit down with the bold and avid souls who will not allow the diffidence [shyness] and unbelief to keep them from the feast of fat things prepared for them.

- A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, pp. 91-92

In Isaiah 55:7 we are told, "**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.**" May we never forget the mercy that God has extended to those who come to Him by faith! **THE MERCY OF GOD!**

When I was working on this study I thought I would be able to cover both the mercy of God and the Grace of God in one study. Obviously that is not going to happen. There is just too much to go over and I do not want to rush through this. You see, the mercy of God is important for us to understand and so too is the grace of God. The mercy of God deals with God not giving to us what we do deserve, and that is death as we have seen this morning. Next time we will look at the grace of God, which deals with getting what we don't deserve, and that is eternal life with God and yet He freely gives that to us in Christ.

And here's the thing. You will never experience the peace of God in your life until you first experience His grace. Think about it, when you look at the New Testament you will see that grace is always before peace and that is done for a reason. There is no peace for the wicked and thus, if you have not come to God by grace, you will never experience His peace. First His grace and then the peace of God will fill your life!

We will look at that more next time, the grace of God. But this morning I pray that you will leave here understanding the rich mercy that God has for your life, it is new every morning, it is unchanging, everlasting, it will never run out. And in saying that, God also wants us to manifest His mercy towards others. Yes, they may not deserve it, they may deserve something that is bad, something that is due them, but extend mercy instead and see what God can do in that situation as you exhibit His mercy to others!