

Searching the Scriptures / 51 / Mercy Is An Attribute Of God / Part 1

Today I would like to discuss three points related to another of God’s attributes – His mercy:

- 1. God Extends Mercy Generally to All Mankind**
- 2. God Extends Mercy Specifically to the Elect by Salvation**
- 3. Mercy is God’s Sovereign Prerogative Because Nobody Deserves It**

God Extends Mercy Generally to All Mankind

Despite the fact that all men are sinners, God extends His “*great mercy*” to all mankind in many different ways as we live out our lives on earth, as we read in Psa 145:8-9, “*The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.*” All life is in God’s hands, and we are dependent upon His general mercy for every breath and heartbeat. We read about this as God spoke by the Apostle Paul to the people of Athens (and us) in Acts 17:24-28: “*God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.*”

We also read in Mat 5:45 that God in His great mercy “*maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*”

God Extends Mercy Specifically to the Elect by Salvation

Although God is merciful to all people in a general way by providing for their physical needs and restraining sin, many people confuse that kind of mercy with salvation itself. However, God only bestows His special gift of mercy – eternal life – specifically upon those whom He chose to save. Despite the fact that God is not even mentioned in the book of Esther, we know there is a spiritual message about the Gospel because that book is part of the Bible. Indeed, that whole book is a historical parable about God’s sovereign power in the affairs of mankind and His salvation mercy upon His people.

In the following two verses, the King’s extending the “golden scepter” to Queen Esther is a beautiful picture of God’s granting the gift of salvation mercy to His elect, the Bride of Christ: Esther 4:11 “*All the king’s servants, and the people of the king’s provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.*”

Esther 5:2 *“And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.”*

Mercy is God’s Sovereign Prerogative Because Nobody Deserves It

Of course, God does not have to bestow His salvation mercy upon anyone because we all deserve eternal damnation for our sins. However, God has the sovereign right to save whomever He so desires without giving any reason to anyone for His actions, as He declares in Rom 9:15-16: *“For he [God] saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”*

For those who would object to God’s right to choose some people for salvation for His glory and honor, God dispels all of man’s arguments in Romans 9:20-23: *“...O man, who art thou that repliest [disputes] against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath [unbelievers] fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy [believers], which he had afore prepared unto glory.”*

The good news of the Gospel is that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners from eternal damnation in Hell and that God allows sinners to humbly petition Him for mercy through prayer like the publican of old in Luke 18:13, *“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”*