

God is Merciful

God Takes Our Punishment

Introduction:

God is *merciful*, which means that he does not give us the punishment we deserve. (This differs slightly from grace – in which God *does* give us blessing or favor that we *do not* deserve.)

In order to talk about God's mercy, we must first understand that we are already condemned. We deserve punishment. We have sinned and rebelled against God's laws. God, as our sovereign creator and judge, is completely just in demanding an eternity of punishment for our sin.

God's mercy is a surprise. In spite of our sin, God reaches out in mercy. Amazingly, this mercy is given through the sacrifice of Jesus himself. He does not give us the punishment we deserve because Jesus took that punishment for us.

This mercy is so vast and powerful, that we can never "out-sin" it. It overwhelms and covers us. We are able to stand completely justified before the Father – because of his mercy.

Memory Verse:

"You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy." Micah 7:18

Other Scripture References:

- "For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which he confirmed to them by oath." Deuteronomy 4:31
- "For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you warned them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you gave them into the hands of the neighboring peoples. But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God." Nehemiah 9:30-31
- "He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities." Psalm 103:9-10
- "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." Lamentations 3:22-23
- "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy." Micah 7:18
- "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:16
- "...because judgement without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment" James 2:13
- "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved." Ephesians 2:4-5

Prayer Focus:

- **Adoration:** Worship God as the redeemer who has had mercy on us, his creation.
- **Confession:** Confess the times we have failed to be merciful to others as God has been merciful to us.
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for his endless mercy, and that no matter how much we have sinned, his death on the cross pays for it all, in full.
- **Supplication:** Ask God to forgive us, and to help us forgive those whom we have sinned against us.

Discussion Questions:

- If God is merciful, how can he send people to hell?
- If God is merciful, how come we sometimes experience consequences here on earth?
- If God is merciful, why does it matter how we live? (Why do we have to stop sinning?)
- Is it difficult or easy to show mercy to people? When might it be easy? When might it be difficult?
- Do we, like God, “delight to show mercy”?
- How does the fact that God is merciful impact our behavior or choices?
- How might God’s mercy help us in our fight against sin?
- What is the difference between mercy and grace?