

## HOW GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS IS BETTER THAN LIFE – PART 1

Take your Bibles and turn once again to Psalm 63. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> week that we have been “mining” this Psalm—or “wringing it dry”—depending on the analogy you prefer. It is a wonderful Psalm where God uses David—who God refers to as “a man after His own heart”—to show us what God wants to see in *our* heart.

First, we've seen the **declaration** of David in the beginning of vs 1—“O God, thou art my God...” God “belonged” to David—because David **belonged to** God! How about you? Is God **your** God? Is He the One you want to **please and praise**—or do you only look at God as your “need-meeter?”

Second, we noted the **decision** of David, also found in vs 1—“early will I seek thee.” Does that mean “early in the day”—or early in life? The answer is “Yes,” but it also means to seek Him **earnestly**.

Third, we saw the **desire of David** in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of vs 1 and vs 2—“my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and glory...” Not only was it a strong desire—it was also **specific**! He wanted to see God's **power and glory**—something we should want to see, too! We don't go to **the sanctuary** to see God's power and glory, though—we go to **the cross**! How does God show His power and glory at the cross? Because it was there that both the power of **death and hell** were defeated by the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ!

**Hell was defeated** at the cross because Jesus **provided an escape** from it. How did He do that? By **paying our penalty** on the cross for us! And **death was defeated** because Jesus rose again! **I Cor 6:14** “And God hath both raised up the Lord, and **will also raise up us** by His own power.”

And last week we began to look at the **discovery** of David found in vs 3: “Because thy lovingkindness is better than life...” What is God's lovingkindness? There are two aspects/two parts to it: grace and mercy.

What is grace? One definition **of grace** is simply this—**God's undeserved favor**. It is God **loading us with blessings** that we don't deserve.

The second aspect of lovingkindness **is mercy**. What is mercy? It is **God withholding judgment** that we **do deserve**. **Psalm 103:10-11** “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup> For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.”

What did David discover about God's grace and mercy that led him to conclude that they were better than life itself? More important than what **David** discovered is **what we can discover** from God's Word that will lead us to the **same conclusion**. This morning we are going to be focusing on this thought: *How God's lovingkindness is Better than Life*.

So what is it about God's lovingkindness—His goodness and mercy—that makes it better than even the best life in this world? I came up with 5 different characteristics or qualities—although I'm sure there are more. This morning we will look at 2 of them; next week we will cover the other 3.

First, let's consider that... **1. God's lovingkindness is available to all**

What does that mean? It means that **anyone can** experience the goodness and kindness and mercy of God! Let's contrast that with what is referred to as “quality of life.”

**A. “Quality of life” is not available to all**

I don't think I'm going out on a limb to suggest that “quality of life” means different things to different people in **different parts** of the world. Case in point—we have more people **coming in** at the Southern border than **going out**!

I remember going to Panama for a couple of weeks while in the military. We were in the foothills of some small mountains and were quite away from a big city. The roads were gravel instead of asphalt, rough instead smooth, and had more cattle and people walking on them than had cars driving on them! And not surprisingly, the homes along the way were at best what we would call “tiny houses”—when in reality they were nothing more than shacks! If I remember right, some people even kept their chickens in the house with

them! Suffice it to say that you didn't let your children put their gum back in their mouth if they dropped it!

"Quality of life" also means different things to different people in the **same part of the world**—and even in the same **building**! My guess is that most of you have visited a nursing home at one time or another. Some residents are able to **walk around**—others never even **leave their beds**! Some have **sharp minds** and can carry on a conversation—others don't know **who** they are or **where** they are!

So even though "quality of life"—regardless of how you define it—is not available to everyone...

#### B. God's lovingkindness is available to all

--God's grace and mercy is just as available to someone who is bed-ridden as it is to a pro-athlete!

--God's grace and mercy is just as available in the foothills of Panama, as it is in the streets of New York!

--God's grace and mercy is just as available to a homeless person, as it is to a mansion-owner!

--And God's grace and mercy is just as available to a hardened criminal, as it to the most God-fearing person you know!

Old/young; rich/poor; tall/short; black, white, yellow, or red; male/female; healthy/not healthy; good-looking—or not so much. None of these things **disqualifies anyone** from the goodness and kindness and mercy of God! It is available to everyone—Loddy, Doddy, and Every body—we used to say in the military!

And since God's lovingkindness is available to **everyone**—it is available to **you**!

But although God's grace and mercy is **available to all**, not everyone is a **partaker**—a receiver—of it. There is **one thing** that shuts the door on it; there is **one thing** that **disqualifies you** from it and makes it **unavailable to you**—even though it is **available** to all! Anyone care to guess what it is? One word answer: **PRIDE!**

#### C. Pride prevents us from receiving God's grace and mercy

How do we know **pride stops us** from being recipients of God's mercy and grace?

Because we have... **i. Examples of the proud not receiving mercy**

Think with me of some of the examples in the Bible. What brought **sin into the world** in the first place?

It **wasn't Eve** eating of the forbidden fruit; it was **Lucifer wanting to be like God** (Is 14:12-14)!

--What led to **Pharaoh's destruction** in the Red Sea? His pride!

--**King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon** was struck with a mental illness called "boanthropy"—thinking he was an ox—because of his pride (Dan 4:30-33)

--In the parable of the **two men that went to the temple to pray**, the self-righteous, proud, religious Pharisee did not receive mercy—but the humble tax-collector did! (Luke 18:10-14)

--In the account of the **penitent thief** found in Luke 23:39-43, one thief humbled himself, trusted Christ, and was in paradise with Jesus that very day! What happened to the other thief? His pride kept him from repenting—and he **ended up in hell** the very same day!

The proud do not **seek** God—and the proud do not **want** God! **Psalm 10:4** "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, **will not seek** after God: God is not in all his thoughts."

--The wicked—because of their pride—**refuse** to seek God!

--"God is not in all his thoughts" does not mean that **sometimes he has** thoughts of God—and **sometimes he doesn't**. It means that God is **not in any** of his thoughts!

And because the proud do not seek God or want God, the proud **do not receive mercy from God**! In fact, God **resists** them; He is **against** them! **I Peter 5:5b** "...be clothed with humility: for God **resisteth the proud**, and giveth grace to the humble."

There is another proof that pride prevents us from receiving God's mercy and grace and it is this...

#### **ii. Expressions of God's desire for people to repent**

Does God *desire* people to repent? Yes, He does! How do we know? Because **He says it!** **Ezekiel 18:23** "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" God wants people to return from their evil ways—to repent—so He can forgive them.

But they won't! Why? Because of their pride! (See also Ez 18:32)

**Ezekiel 33:11** is even more emphatic: "...As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked **turn from his way** and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

It is impossible to miss the heart of God in these verses! 'My pleasure is not in death! I want the wicked to turn—and live! Why won't you turn? Why will ye die?'

The context here points to their *physical* death, but it applies equally to *spiritual* death. If you don't turn... if you don't repent ...if you remain proud—you will die *spiritually*. What does that mean? You will be separated from God in a place called hell!

Does the Bible say that? Yes, it does! **John 3:36** "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

If we believe that having *everlasting life* is being in heaven with Jesus, then we must believe that "not seeing life"—and having "the wrath of God" abiding on us—is the opposite—and means *eternal condemnation*. You can't believe just the *first* half of the verse and ignore the rest!

How do we know pride prevents us from receiving God's grace and mercy? **First**, because we have examples of the proud *receiving judgment*. **Second**, because we have expressions from God's heart that He *desires people to turn*—to repent—so that He can extend mercy.

**Third**, because of the ... **iii. Expression of sorrow over those that don't repent**

Notice on your outline the words of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, as he *begged the people to repent* before the destruction of Jerusalem. Let's not forget, though, that it is also *God's heart* that we are seeing through Jeremiah's heart: **Jer 13:15, 17** "Hear ye, and give ear; **be not proud**: for the Lord hath spoken. <sup>17</sup> But if **ye will not hear** it, my soul shall weep in secret places **for your pride**; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive."

Jeremiah is not the only one who weeps over pride and lack of repentance—Jesus did too!

**Mt 22:37-38** "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, **how often would I have gathered** thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and **ye would not!** <sup>38</sup> Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

--'I wanted you to repent, so I sent prophets to warn you—but you killed them!'

--'I wanted to gather you as a hen gathers her chick under her wings—but you refused!'

'And now—because of your pride—judgment has come.' The nation is being rejected—temporarily—by God!

Notice on your outline **John 5:39** "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

--"Search the Scriptures"—look in God's Word—"for in them ye think ye have eternal life"—'and you are right: God's Word tells you how to get to heaven—and they will point you to Me!'

--**Now vs 40**—what I believe to be *some of the saddest words Jesus ever spoke*: "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

It is as if Jesus was saying, 'You want to know the answer of how to get to heaven. You look in the Bible to get the answer—and it points to me. But now that you have the answer, you refuse to come to. I want you to come to me for forgiveness and eternal life—but **ye will not come!**'

What about you? Have you come to Christ? If not, you need to! God's mercy and grace is *available to you*—and God is willing to give it!

Why is God's lovingkindness better than life? First, because it is *available to all*.

There is a **second** way that God's mercy and grace is better than life and it is this:

## 2. **God's lovingkindness is boundless in blessings**

What does that mean? It means God's grace and mercy will not run out—He has an endless supply of both! I'm going to try to explain this by first giving you an illustration. Like any illustration used to explain spiritual truths, it does not match exactly—but hopefully it will get the point across. Here goes. The “last will and testament” that my grandfather on my biological father's side had drawn up was quite “interesting”—for lack of a better word. He divided his estate into 32 equal parts, then designated **who** would get **how many** parts.

His sons got 4 parts each; most of us grandchildren got ½ of a part—which means 1/64<sup>th</sup> of his inheritance. I say **most of us** grandchildren because 2 out of the 16 got a **full** part. Why did 2 get a full part—and 14 only get ½ of a part? I don't know for sure—but I wasn't one of the two!

Suppose I did something like that in my will. As it stands right now, we have 9 living grandchildren—meaning each grandchild would get 1/9 of our inheritance. Our son in Texas does not have children, but he and his wife are seeing a fertility doctor regarding that. If they have **one**, each grandchild will get 1/10<sup>th</sup>. But if they **have 6**, each grandchild will only get 1/15<sup>th</sup>! And if the other grandchildren knew what was going on, they would probably say, “Uncle Ben—stop having kids 😊!” In way of application, let's consider:

### A. The vastness of God's gifts

How vast—how plenteous—are God's gifts? They are **limitless**; there is no end! Think about when a family **adds another child**—like our missionary family the Boyles. If their income doesn't go up, the money has to be spread a little thinner, so each child technically gets less. And the **time** each child gets definitely decreases, too!

That doesn't happen, though, with God. God will not “run out of” what we **need now** because His resources are endless. He does not run out of “things” ...or time...or energy ...or wisdom! He always has enough for each of His children—and much more!

What about our **future** inheritance? Although the slice of my “inheritance pie” **will shrink** as each grandchild is added, that is not true when someone is added to God's family. Imagine a will where **each person** gets 100% of the estate! Wonder how the lawyers would figure that out?! Impossible from a **human** stand-point, of course—but not impossible with God! In fact, that is what our inheritance in Christ is!

**Romans 8:17** “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ...”

God is our Father and our inheritance is from Him! He gives everything to Christ—and we are joint-heirs with Christ, so we get it all, too!

What a blessing! God will **never say**, ‘I'm sorry; I **can't add** any more children!’ And Jesus will **never say**, ‘In my Father's house, there is **no more room!**’

Not only does God have an endless supply **of gifts**, He also has an endless supply **of mercy**.

### Let's consider next: B. The depth of God's mercy

How **deep** is God's mercy? Is there a point where God says, ‘This is too much for me to forgive. I can't forgive you—you are too bad!’ I want to go back again to my grandfather's last will and testament.

Besides noticing—for the first time—that two grandchildren got **special treatment**, I also noticed that two of his sons—my uncles—seemed to **be missing**! The best I can remember, there were 7 boys—but only 5 are named in the will! So I called my sister. She couldn't remember the name, but she said one of our uncles had died and his children were probably the two that got a bigger slice of the pie! Mystery #1 solved!

But what about the other missing son? I **remembered** that one uncle was in prison for killing someone! What I **didn't remember** was that it was **his wife** that he killed when he was drunk! And so, my grandfather left his son out of the will—maybe because he would never get out of prison; or maybe because he considered him too bad! Did my grandfather forgive his son? I'm not sure—and I really have no way of finding out!

But what about God? How deep is God's mercy?

--Can God forgive my uncle that killed his wife?	Yes, He can!
--Can God forgive a woman who has her unborn child murdered?	Yes, He can!
--Can God forgive an adulterer...or a homosexual...or a transgender?	Yes, He can!

--Can God forgive a child of His that has wandered away for a long time? Yes, He can!

How deep is God's mercy? God can forgive **anyone** that comes to Him through Christ in **this** life!

**Eph 2:4** says God is **rich** in mercy. **Ps 86:5** reminds us that God is **plenteous** in mercy—and ready to forgive!

“For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and **plenteous** in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.”

But as mentioned earlier, God can't—and won't—forgive **the proud** until they humble themselves.

And God can't make you a child of His in the **next life** if you don't become a child of His in **this** life! Are you a child of God? God is rich in mercy—but there will come a day when the chance to receive His mercy is past!

So what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. First, be honest about your relationship with God. Are you sure you are a child of God? If not, that is the first thing you need to get settled. God delights in forgiveness; He longs to pardon; His heart breaks over your pride and refusal to repent. In the words of Ezekiel, why will ye die? Turn, turn yourself—and live!

2. Second, if you are a child of God, what kind of child are you?

If you are living in **disobedience**, repent and come back to Him. You know that is what you need to do. He is ready to forgive—and plenteous in mercy. Stop being stubborn and proud and come back to Him.

3. What about forgiveness toward others? Aren't you glad God is rich in mercy? Aren't you glad He has forgiven you much? You need to forgive others in the same way....