

## HOW GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS IS BETTER THAN LIFE – PART 2

Take your Bibles and turn one more time to Psalm 63; please follow along as I read verses. For the past several weeks—minus the Sunday I wasn't here—we've been looking at David's **discovery** as recorded in verse 3. What had David come to realize and believe? That God's **lovingkindness was better** than the best this life has to offer!

The **desire of God** is not just that we learn about **David having** this attitude and belief, though—He wants **us to have it**, too! God wants us to make the **same discovery**—and have the **same conviction**—that God's lovingkindness is indeed better than life! **Let's recap** what we've covered so far—although not necessarily in the order we looked at them.

We've looked at what the lovingkindness of God **is—and is not**. God's lovingkindness is not necessarily **a healthy, financially prosperous, care-free and trouble-free life!** We can have horrible health, only a little money, and lots of problems, but still be experiencing the lovingkindness of God!

So **what is** the lovingkindness of God? It involves **grace**—having blessings and favor from God that we **don't deserve**; as well as **mercy**—God's withholding of judgment that we **do deserve**. **Lamentations 3:22** reminds us “It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.”

God's lovingkindness is more than just grace and mercy, though. Last week we looked at the **blessing of assurance** as a “treasure chest” inside of God's “storehouse” of lovingkindness. What is in the treasure chest of assurance? Because of God's lovingkindness, we can have the assurance of **forgiveness of sins**...and our **future with Christ**...and the assurance of God's **presence with us now** and His **never-ending power** always.

And so—regardless of the circumstances we find ourselves in—we can rest confidently in the fact that **God is in control** and that no matter what happens to us here on this earth, we have eternity with Him to look forward to **if we are His**.

**Not everyone** is His, though, are they? There are some—actually **many**—that **do not** belong to God. Although they enjoy **some of God's lovingkindness now**—He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good—and some of **God's mercies now**—He does not immediately punish them for their sins—God's lovingkindness for them **will end** when they take their last breath!

How can God's lovingkindness become ours **permanently**? How can we have the **assurance of forgiveness** of sins and **a future home** in heaven with Christ? By being **accepted by God** into God's family! **How does** that happen? When we come to God in repentance and faith just like the **thief** on the cross did—and just like the **prodigal son** did! What is **God's response** when we do that? The **same response** the father had toward his wayward son—God welcomes us with open arms...and embraces us...and forgives us...and makes us His child!

What a joyous thing it is to be **accepted and forgiven** by God—and to have the **assurance** of both!

You'll notice from the title of today's message that this morning we will be looking at part 2 of a sermon I preached back on September 11<sup>th</sup>—*How God's Lovingkindness is Better than Life!* At that time, we noted that God's lovingkindness is **available to all**—even though “quality of life” is not necessarily available to all.

We also noted in that message that the lovingkindness of God is **boundless in blessings**. God will never **run out** of what is needed to take care of His children—and God **will never say**, “I'm sorry; I can't **add any more children**; there is no more room in my house!”

This morning, we are going to look at 3 more ways that God's lovingkindness is better than life.

### **1. God's lovingkindness counters life's sorrows**

In other words, God's lovingkindness **offsets**—it nullifies—the sufferings that we experience in this life.

### A. The fact of suffering and sorrow

Are there sufferings and sorrows in this life? There certainly are! I know **some** of the tragedies that **some** of you have gone through—but I obviously don't know **all of them!** And I'm quite certain that if we were to **go around the auditorium** and have **each of you share** some of the hardships and heartaches that you have experienced, many of us would be **quite surprised** at what we would learn!

I'm obviously **not going** to do that, but I do want to look at some of what the Apostle Paul went through in the way of suffering. Please take your Bibles and turn to II Corinthians 11 and follow along as I read verses 23-28. Quite a list, isn't it? Can't spend a lot of time on this, but I want to bring three things to your attention from this list.

- 1) The Christian life is not easy and often involves suffering.
- 2) Regardless of how much we have suffered, probably none of us have suffered as much as Paul did!
- 3) Suffering comes in all "shapes and sizes."

**i. Hardship**—hungry, thirsty, cold, naked, shipwrecked 3 times, spent a day and a night in the sea, and was in prison multiple times

**ii. Hurt/Pain**—Whipped multiple times, beaten with rods, stoned once

**iii. Heart-ache**—The Jews hated him, false brethren hated him, the non-Jews hated him, robbers chased him, and on top of all this, the burden he had for the churches and the people in them

Next, let's consider... B. The comparison of sufferings with future glory

**Romans 8:18** "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

**Who** did God use to write this? Paul—the same guy whose **list of sufferings** we have here before us in II Corinthians 11! Let's think through what is being said here.

"For I reckon..." One of the definitions of "reckon" means to "guess, imagine, or suppose." Paul is not using "reckon" that way. "Reckon" comes from the Greek word *lo-gid'-zo-mai* which here means to "conclude or judge based on the facts." Not surprisingly, it also carries the idea of accounting one thing above another.

If there were a **scale of sufferings of this present time on one side**—and the **glory which shall be revealed in us** in the future **on the other side**, **the glory** would **far outweigh the sufferings!**

Amazing thought, isn't it? The sufferings will be **so insignificant**—regardless of how large they **seem now**—that they aren't even **worth comparing** to the future glory that awaits us!

What is the glory that will be revealed **in us**? In one sense, it's the opposite of sufferings, right? But that doesn't tell us much. So let's contrast sufferings in this life with our future glory in heaven.

--Sufferings here involve hardship—there won't be any hardships in heaven

--Sufferings here involve hurt and pain—there won't be any hurt or pain in heaven

--Sufferings here involve broken-heartedness...and pressures...and rejection—but there won't be any of that in heaven either!

--Sometimes suffering comes from sinful choices. We **won't** sin in heaven—and can't sin in heaven—because we will be forever free from our sin nature in heaven!

Please turn to II Corinthians 4:17. Here Paul gives another reason why the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us. What's the reason?

Because the sufferings of this **present time**—regardless of how long—**will end**. They are "but for a moment" ...they will **come to pass**...they **will not continue** forever. But the glory which shall be revealed in us—the transformation whereby we are **given a body** like unto Jesus' body and the **removal of our sin-nature**—**will be** eternal!

We'll come back to this thought in a little bit, but for now we should see the obvious point that God through Paul **wants us to know**—that our **present sufferings are nothing** compared to the future glory that awaits us!

Why is God's lovingkindness better than life? Because the lovingkindness that we will enjoy someday in heaven **counters**—it offsets and nullifies—**any and all** suffering we will experience in this life.

A second reason that God's lovingkindness is better than life is because...

## **2. God's lovingkindness is dependent on God's dependability**

That might sound a bit confusing at first, but I believe the confusion will clear up as we compare how and why **we love** people with how and why **God loves** people.

### A. Our love towards others is sometimes conditional

**What** does that mean? It means we love someone based on whether or not they **meet certain conditions!**

If we only "love" **our spouse** because of what they do for us...or how they treat us...or how they talk to us, our love is conditional...and selfish...and really not love at all!

If we only "love" **our children** when they behave and obey and respect us—but don't love them as much when they misbehave, disobey, disrespect, and disappoint us—our love is **conditional**.

Neither of these is right! We are to love **unconditionally**—and yet the reality is that we often don't! **Husbands of all ages** are reminded to have an **unconditional, Christ-like** love for their wives.

**Ephesians 5:25** "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it;"

**Colossians 3:19** "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."

What is interesting to me, though, is that God specifically addresses how **older husbands** are to treat their wives. **Proverbs 5:18** "Let thy fountain be blessed: and **rejoice** with **the wife of thy youth**."

Why does God **tell us to rejoice with** the wife of your youth? Because sometimes **we don't!**

**Malachi 2:14** "Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and **the wife of thy youth**, against whom **thou hast dealt treacherously**: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant."

Why does God tell us **not to deal treacherously** with our wife? Because sometimes **we do!**

So much more could be said about the husband/wife relationship, but we must move on. Before I do, though, I want to give you **the key to a successful marriage**. Here it is: *Love and obey the God of the Bible with honesty and humility*. If both the husband and wife do that, you will have a happy marriage—guaranteed!

### B. The ability of others to love us can cease

What do I mean by that? An obvious meaning is that when we **lose a loved one**, their love for us ends. We carry it in our heart as a memory, but it is obviously not even close to being the same thing.

In addition to that, though, there are those that suffer from things like Alzheimer's or dementia. When a person no longer **knows** that the person visiting them is **their husband or wife**, it is pretty safe to say that their **ability to love** you has ceased. Ron and Shelly Hamilton come to mind. Ron—aka "Patch the Pirate"—wrote numerous songs, a number of which are in our hymnal. It is my understanding that Ron is at the point in his dementia where he does not see Shelly as his wife. His ability to love her as he once did is gone!

God's love **is not like** that though, is it? C. God's love is both unconditional and unceasing

#### **i. God's lovingkindness is unconditional**

God's love for us is unconditional; it is **not performance-based**; it is not dependent upon us and **our behavior**. Not sure about you, but I'm **incredibly thankful** for that!

God **knows everything** about us—and yet **loves us** anyway! He does not love us because **we do certain** things for Him...or **respect Him**...or **treat Him** a certain way! He loves us **in spite of us**—not **because** of us! **Romans 5:8** "But God commendeth [demonstrated] His love toward us, in that, **while we were yet sinners**, Christ died for us."

Not only is God's love unconditional, **ii. God's lovingkindness is unceasing**

God will not **cease to exist** because He is everlasting—and so is His love! **Jer 31:3** "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have **loved thee with an everlasting love**: therefore **with lovingkindness** have I drawn thee." And God will not lose His capacity/ability to love because **He is love**; that is His nature (1 Jo 4:8)

How is God's lovingkindness better than life? First, it counters life's sufferings and sorrows. Second, it is dependent on **God's dependability**—not ours.

### Third... **3. God's lovingkindness is eternal in its effects**

We just noted from Jeremiah 31:3 that God's love—and His lovingkindness—is **everlasting**. And because it is everlasting—because it is eternal—it has **eternal effects**. In other words, there are things that will **continue** forever—and there are things that will **cease** forever—because of God's lovingkindness.

What are those things? We've looked at many of them before, but I'm of the opinion that we should **never grow weary** of hearing about heaven! I'm also of the opinion that if you **don't like talking about** heaven, it may be because you are not going there!

#### A. Things that will continue forever

Please take your Bibles and turn to Revelation 22:3-5.

**1) God's children will continue forever!** We see that in the end of vs 5 "...and they shall reign for ever and ever." What does that mean? **For ever and ever!** *When we've been there ten*

*thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sin God's praise than when we'd first begun.*

Also seen in I Thess 4:17 "and so shall we ever be with the Lord" and I John 2:17 "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

**2) God's forgiveness and mercy will continue forever!** We saw that last week in Psalm 103:12 "as far as the east is from the west" and in Psalm 136 where it says 26 times "for His mercy endureth forever."

**3) We will experience joy forever!** Does the Bible say that? Yes, it does! **Psalm 16:11** "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: **in thy presence is fulness of joy**; at thy right hand there are **pleasures for evermore.**"

We will be **forever with God**—and in His presence is **fulness of joy** and **pleasures for evermore!** **We think we know** what fulness of joy and pleasures are now, but I'm quite certain we have only a **limited** idea.

Ephesians 2:7 says "That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace..."

Eph 3:8 refers to "the unsearchable riches of Christ" & Eph 3:19 mentions the "love of Christ which passes knowledge"

#### B. Things that will cease forever

Again, these are things that we've talked about before, but are always good to be reminded of.

1) Rev 20:10. No more devil—forever!

2) Rev 21:4. No more tears, death, sorrow, crying, or pain.

3) Rev 22:3 "and there shall be no more curse..." I take this—along with the phrase in 21:4 that says "the former things are passed away" to mean that **sin**—and the possibility of sin—is gone; it is eradicated and cannot happen again. History **will not** repeat itself!

How can we be sure of that? Look at Revelation 21:5 "And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." If the **former things are passed away**—including the first heaven and first earth (Rev 21:1)—and God declares He has made **all things new**, that is all I need to believe **that the cycle** of Satan, sin, suffering, and death will forever be done away with!

What are the **eternal effects** of God's lovingkindness? God's children will have a **perfect, non-aging body**... an **unstained and pure conscience**... **a nature that cannot sin**—and will live in a perfect place with a perfect God—experiencing fullness of joy and fullness of pleasures (the right kind)—for ever and ever!

On top of that, **everything evil** will be gone! Satan will be gone...sin will be gone...crying, pain, sickness, and sorrow will all be gone. And death will be gone, too! **I Cor 15:26** says "The last **enemy** that shall be destroyed is death."

You know **what else** will be gone? I just mentioned that **sin will be gone**—God's children will be given a new nature and will be incapable of sinning—Praise the Lord!

But not only will **sin** be gone, **sinners** will be gone, too! What do I mean by that?

Please turn to Rev 20:6. **Who** are these people? **Forgiven** sinners! **How** were they forgiven? By repenting of their sin and **placing their trust in Jesus' shed blood** as the payment for their sins! Although their

bodies died (1<sup>st</sup> death), the second death—where their soul would be separated from God if they had died unforgiven—**had no power** over them. So the **forgiven** dead are with Christ and reign with Him.

Now Revelation 20:12. Here we see the judgment of the **unforgiven** dead. What happens to them? They stand before God and are judged according to their works. What happens **then**?

Notice vs 14-15. Because of their works—meaning their sins—they are sentenced to the **second death**.

--**What** is the second death? It is being **separated from God** in a place called the lake of fire!

--Do they **want** to go there? No; both vs 14 and 15 says they were “cast into” it.

--**How long** will they be there? Vs 10 says that the devil...and beast...and false prophet will be there **for ever and ever**. It is a **forever** place...a **no-escape place**...an **eternal** place.

Jesus Himself confirmed this in **Mt 25:41** “Then shall He [The King; Jesus] say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels:”

**What happens** in the lake of fire? Vs 10 says they “shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

Did they **have to go** there? No; they **could have been forgiven** of their sins before they died—but they **refused** Jesus’ offer of forgiveness and salvation.

What about you? **Are you** forgiven? God wants you to be—and you can be—but there is only one way to have your sins paid for and be forgiven and that is through Jesus. Do you **have** Him? Is He **yours**? Have you **come to Him** for forgiveness? He wants you to—and will take you just as you are!

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

1. First, honestly consider this question: What **kind** of sinner are you? You are a sinner—that is an established fact. But in God’s eyes, you are either a **forgiven** sinner—or an **unforgiven** sinner.

--If you are a **forgiven sinner**, you will spend eternity **with God** in heaven forever and experience all the things that I’ve described throughout the message.

--If you are an **unforgiven sinner**, you will spend eternity without God in the lake of fire suffering torment!

2. If you are a child of God, be thankful! Rejoice in—and enjoy—His lovingkindness!

3. Honestly evaluate the love that you have for your spouse and children. Ask God to help you love them unconditionally—the same way He loves you!