

GOD'S MERCY TOWARD THEM THAT FEAR HIM

TEXT: PSALM 103:1-22

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Bible repeatedly teaches that God judges sin.
2. Numbers 32:23 says, "Be sure your sin will find you out."
3. Ezekiel 18:4, 20 says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."
4. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death."
5. Galatians 6:7 says, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."
6. James 1:15 says, "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."
7. Psalm 9:17 says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."
8. The Bible teaches that God judges sin, and the Bible also teaches, "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Psalm 103:8).
9. Throughout the Bible we see both God's mercy and His wrath. And it is at the cross of Christ that we see each in its fullness.

I. GOD MANIFESTS HIS MERCY

1. I think the key here in Psalm 103 is found in verses 11, 13, and 17. The LORD is merciful "toward them that fear him" (103:11).
2. Luke 1:50 says, "His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation."
3. Our Lord said in Matthew 10:28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
4. You will recall that when our Lord was crucified between two thieves, in the beginning both of these criminals were railing on Him. Matthew 27:44 says, "The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth."
5. Somehow, the fear of God came upon one of the thieves and he repented (cf. Luke 23:39-43).
6. Our Lord was merciful to the repentant thief. The repentant thief went to paradise (heaven). But the impenitent thief went to hell.
7. God manifests His mercy to "them that fear him" (103:11, 13, 17).
8. Those who refuse God's grace and mercy will be judged accordingly. Verse 9 says, "He will not always chide (strive with sinners): neither will he keep his anger for ever."

9. Wickedness is referred to in this Psalm as "sins...iniquities" and "transgressions" (103:10, 12). God is longsuffering and merciful, but God must judge sin.
10. And though God has manifested His mercy in innumerable ways, there is a limit to God's patience -- "He will not always chide (strive with sinners): neither will he keep his anger for ever."
11. In Genesis 6:3, "the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man," and then He sent the flood. And we also see in Genesis 6:8, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."
12. All throughout Scripture we see God's judgment and "His mercy toward them that fear him" (Psalm 103:11).
13. Hebrews 11:7 says Noah, "being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark." Noah feared God, and God spared Noah and his family when He sent the flood.
14. When we consider God's mercy, we ought to praise the Lord for what he has not done as well as for what he has done us. Psalm 103:10 says, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."
15. God's grace is manifested when He gives us what we do not deserve - - eternal life. God's mercy is manifested when He does not give us what we do deserve -- eternal damnation.
16. Spurgeon said, "Up to this moment, at our very worst estate, we have never suffered as we deserved to suffer; our daily lot has not been apportioned upon the rule of what we merited, but on the far different measure of undeserved kindness. Shall we not bless the Lord?"
17. This is the Psalmist says, "Bless the LORD, O my soul" (103:1, 2, 20, 21, 22; 104:1).
18. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins..." (103:10). Surely each person gathered here today can acknowledge this.
19. One expositor said, "The plenitude of His goodness outweighs the plenitude of our guilt. When He chides it is His strange work" (William Law).
20. Judgment is called God's strange work in Isaiah 28:21 because God would rather forgive than punish (cf. Psalm 103:10).

II. GOD MEASURES HIS MERCY (103:11, 12).

1. No one can estimate the height of the heavens above, and no one can totally comprehend God's mercy (103:11).
2. If looking up to heaven is the vertical measure of God's mercy, then looking from the east to the west is the horizontal measure (103:12).

3. Rudyard Kipling wrote:

*Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat.*

4. East and West never meet. The geographic points of the compass never meet, and the Psalmist says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (103:12).
5. One preacher explained it this way: "If we travel north from a given point, sooner or later we will reach the north pole, a definite point; then we travel south to the south pole, another definite point. East and west are a different matter. We can start to travel east and there is no point, so long as we continue in that direction, at which we start to travel west; or we can start to travel west and, no matter how long we continue, there is no point at which we start to travel east. West is always west; east is always east. So we take a point on earth and draw a line vertically into infinity. We also draw a line horizontally into infinity -- 'so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.' There is a point on this planet where those two infinite lines intersect: the vertical line and the horizontal line. The point is Calvary! We draw all our lines from the cross...That is how the Lord measures His mercy -- in terms of the cross" (John Phillips, *Exploring the Psalms*).
6. Over 100 years ago, a Norwegian explorer named Nansen tried to measure the depth of the ocean in the far North. He used a long measuring line, and when he discovered he had not touched the bottom he wrote in his journal, "Deeper than that."
7. Several times he tried until finally he fastened all his lines together and let them down, but his last record was like the first -- "Deeper than that."
8. That is how it is with God's grace and mercy. "Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus, Deeper than the mighty rolling sea..."
9. Nansen left without ever knowing the depth of the ocean at that point except it was deeper than he was able to measure.
10. Today we know more about the depth of the ocean. We are told the deepest part of the ocean is called the "Challenger Deep," and is located beneath the western Pacific Ocean in the southern end of the Mariana Trench, which runs several hundred kilometers southwest of the U.S. territorial island of Guam.
11. The Mariana Trench is 120 times larger than the Grand Canyon and is more than a mile deeper than Mount Everest is tall! But this nothing compared to God's mercy which is immeasurable.

12. Challenger Deep is approximately 36,200 feet deep (6.85 miles deep). It is named after the HMS *Challenger*. But this is nothing compared to God's grace and mercy which is immeasurable.
13. Micah 7:19 says God has cast all our sins "into the depths of the sea."
14. The Bible teaches the height of God's mercy and grace ("For as the heavens are high above the earth"), the breadth of God's mercy and grace ("As far as the east is from the west"), and the depth of God's mercy and grace -- "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19).
15. Many years ago, Napoleon's soldiers were cleaning out an old underground prison used by the Spaniards during the Inquisition. The soldiers found the skeleton of a prisoner, with a chain still attached to his ankle bone. Next to this prisoner, they saw etched into the wall a cross. This cross had been cut into the rock wall with a sharp piece of metal.
16. Above the cross was the Spanish word for "height."
17. Below the cross was the Spanish word for "depth."
18. On the right side of the cross: the word for "length," and on the left side, "breadth."
19. It is at the cross that we see how God measures His mercy!
20. When the Bible says that our sins are forgiven and have been removed "as far as the east is from the west" (103:12), we have the assurance that they are an immeasurable distance away. They are gone forever.
21. Isaiah 43:25 says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."
22. Hebrews 8:12 says, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."
23. Hebrews 10:17 says, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."
24. God is omniscient, and He knows all things. But God is also merciful and He chooses to forget. So God says, "For I will be merciful...and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

III. GOD MULTIPLIES HIS MERCY (103:13-22).

1. "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him..." (103:17).
2. God's mercy is "from everlasting to everlasting." Peter asked the Lord, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" (Matthew 18:21).

3. Our Lord answered Peter, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22). In the Bible, the number seven represents God's perfect provision. Our Lord was telling Peter that there is no limit to God's mercy.
4. "From everlasting to everlasting" and "seventy times seven" signify God's perfect mercy and grace.
5. The Bible says God extends His mercy and grace to "them that fear Him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17, 18).
6. We see in Scripture repeated reminders of man's transitoriness and God's eternal mercy and righteousness (103:14-17).
7. The other day Mario Cuomo died. His son Governor Andrew Cuomo was quoted as saying he learned how to be arrogant from his father. Too bad his father never taught him that the Bible says, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (I Peter 5:5).
8. Years from now, no one will remember Mario Cuomo and no one will remember Andrew Cuomo. When I was born Thomas Dewey was the governor of New York State, but few people remember him today. Mr. Dewey ran twice for president of the United States but very few people remember that (103:15, 16).
9. When I was born Robert Wagner was the mayor of NYC. He was mayor for three terms (12 years), but few remember him today.
10. Worldly rulers come and go -- mayors, governors, presidents, kings, and dictators, but the Bible says, "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (103:19).

CONCLUSION:

1. Long ago, there was a very poor woman who lived in a slum in London. She never had enough food to eat. She never had enough coal to put in her fireplace. She never had any money in her purse, etc. For her, life was very tough.
2. One day a group of kind Christians invited her to go on a trip to the ocean. When she arrived and looked out at the beautiful ocean, she started crying.
3. Someone asked her why she was crying and she pointed at the ocean and said, "That is the only thing I have ever seen that there was enough of."
4. What a joy it is to tell sinners that God has oceans of mercy. There is enough of it, and there is more than our finite minds can comprehend.

