

## God IS Good

During the amazing discussion between Yahweh and Moses recorded in Exodus 33, the LORD said to Moses, *“you have found favour in my sight, and I know you by name.”* To which Moses replied, *“Please show me your glory?”* (Exodus 33:17-18). Exodus 33 is a rich account of the intimate relationship mutually enjoyed between Yahweh and Moses. Because the Lord is omniscient (all-knowing), He knew everything there was to know about Moses. Moses could not reveal anything to God that was not already familiar to God.

But the same could not be said of Moses due to his limited mind. Moses could only perceive attributes of Yahweh which were graciously revealed to him. So, when Moses requested, *“show me your glory,”* Yahweh responded in a way that would enable Moses to receive a summary view of God’s glory. Moses was about to receive a highly accurate overview of the accumulative beauties of all God’s character. This incredible glimpse of Yahweh’s essence would happen in just a moment of time. But I suspect that for Moses, it would seem as if time stood still as he

witnessed such an out-of-this-world revelation of His Sovereign Creator.

As the Lord prepared Moses for such an awe inspiring experience, He said to Moses, *“I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy* (Exodus 33:19).

Notice the sequence in which God was to reveal His glory to Moses. Everything that could be revealed of Yahweh would be encapsulated in His *goodness*. Out of *goodness* would flow every attribute of the Lord. As the *name ‘The LORD’* was to be proclaimed, Moses would witness attribute upon attribute of Yahweh’s *goodness*.

Astounding as that would be for Moses, there was more specific detail which Yahweh wanted Moses to understand. The Lord wanted Moses to know with absolute clarity that *“I will be gracious”* and I *“will show mercy.”* This would be Yahweh’s testimony of Himself.

The accumulative manifestation of God’s glorious *goodness* would be seen through the expressions of God’s grace and

mercy. This was so necessary for Moses, as he was called to lead a rebellious and stiff-necked people (Exo 33:3) who would never qualify to receive God's goodness by their own merit.

What's more, Yahweh's grace and mercy would be dispensed according to His *'will.'* Because sinful Israel could never qualify, it would be necessary for the *will* of God to overrule their sinful undeserving lives with His determined grace and mercy. Moses would then understand this to be the glorious manifestation of God's *goodness*.

**And so, it happened.** Yahweh preserved Moses' life during this revelation by placing him in a crack within a rock face. Then, covering Moses with His hand, and only allowing Moses to view His back, Yahweh passed by Moses while proclaiming His name. That was sufficient to overwhelm Moses' senses with exposure to God's glory (Exodus 34:5-9). All of Yahweh's *goodness* was revealed, all of His grace and mercy was exposed. Every human sense that Moses possessed would have perceived Yahweh's *goodness* perfectly and completely as intended by the Lord.

Yahweh's *goodness* interlinks and synchronises His grace, mercy, kindness, love, forgiveness, compassion, patience, generosity, care, and more. Goodness is the central means of God's character through which Yahweh expresses His holiness. And it is His holiness that permeates and distinguishes His every character attribute with absolute purity and perfection.

David mentions this in Psalm 23:6, "*surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...*" To know anything of God's mercy is to taste of His glorious goodness. To know God is to know His goodness which is always present and can never lessen or cease. **God IS Good!**

Of particular interest in Exodus 33:19, is Yahweh's focus on His grace, His mercy, and His will. These attributes display and transport His goodness into our world and into our lives.

### **God is Graciously Good**

Doctor Steven Lawson summarises grace with the following statement. "*Divine grace is God's unmerited favour toward unworthy sinners that delivers them from His just condemnation and bestows on them His forgiveness and*

*righteousness. It is the attribute of God by which He withholds from sinful mankind what they truly deserve - judgment. Instead, He gives them what they do not deserve - salvation. Grace is given freely by God, without any cost, to the one who receives it by faith.”* (Lawson, Steven J. Show Me Your Glory: Understanding the Majestic Splendor of God (Reformation Trust Publishing)).

God owes humanity nothing. He is NOT in debt to His creation in any way. It was mankind who stepped away from fellowship with God through sin (Genesis 3:19). Death was the predicted and inevitable result of Adam and Eve’s disobedience. So, from that early time in human history, God’s engagement with humanity had to be based upon His grace.

God’s grace is always inspired by His loving mercy and is always initiated by Himself. He is always the one who predetermines all the details that must come to fulfilment for a sinner to experience His grace. Plus, it is always God who brings to completion any works of His grace within our lives. In this way, God wills His goodness upon those He *“chose... in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love<sup>5</sup> he*

*predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace...”* (Ephesians 1:4-6).

When thinking of God’s grace and human works, they can NEVER exist together for the purpose of salvation. Divine grace and human efforts contradict each other, proving to be incompatible for salvation, lacking any ability to function together. The apostle Paul firmly states this in Romans 11:6, *“if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”*

The nature of God’s grace is that it can never be earned, it is always given freely without cost to the recipient. Grace is never a reward for good works, rather, grace is a gift to the guilty sinner.

Paul carefully explains this grace principle in Ephesians 2:8, *“for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”* Grace is the ONLY foundation for salvation. Grace is the ONLY foundation on which faith can exist and function. Therefore, Paul says that *“faith”* is the *“grace”* gift from God to a sinner which enables salvation.

Grace is a wonderful expression of God's goodness. The realisation of God's grace grows humility, worship, gratitude, and the desire to serve within the believer. Grace should always be amongst the most frequently worshipped attributes of Yahweh. **God is Graciously Good!**

### **God is Mercifully Good**

Again, Doctor Steven Lawson summarises mercy with the following statement. *"Paul writes, 'He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy' (Titus 3: 5). "Mercy" (Greek eleos) refers to His heartfelt pity toward those in great affliction. This mercy moves Him with compassion to provide relief for sinners in their distress."* (Lawson, Steven J. Show Me Your Glory: Understanding the Majestic Splendor of God (Reformation Trust Publishing)).

Although grace and mercy are similar, they are not interchangeable. They are distinct from each other and highlight differing aspects of God's goodness.

God's mercy is consistent with all other facets of His nature, and is therefore dependable, just, fair, and holy. Following David being called to account by the prophet Nathan for his

sin with Bathsheba, David repents before the Lord. *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions”* (Psalm 51:1). David knew God well enough to know that you can depend upon the certainty of God’s holy heart. Yahweh is merciful, loving, and forgiving. So, guilty David pleads His case before the Lord. There, David found the required mercy to be completely cleansed and set back on a path of righteous living.

In Lamentations, the prophet Jeremiah speaks out of great anguish over the suffering of fallen Jerusalem. However, during the terrible suffering Jeremiah proclaims, *“the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup> they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness”* (Lamentations 3:22-23).

God is NEVER exhausted of mercy. He never tires of administering compassionate love through His mercy. His people can trust that the Lord refreshes His application of mercy into their lives each and every morning. This is an extraordinary application of mercy which grows out of the fact that God is faithful. Therefore, He is dependable in the administration of mercy. Yahweh’s holiness means His

faithfulness is unchanging and always looking for opportunities to show mercy where it is not merited.

The Lord's mercy is always expressed by Him taking from His heavenly resources and dispensing them to His people. Mercy is never theoretical only. Rather, mercy sees that His spiritual resources are poured out through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26), through the Word of God (Jn 17:17), through the service of angels (Heb 1:14), and through the faithful service of God's people (Rom 12:13) to meet the needs of God's beloved children (2Pe 1:3-4).

The Lord's mercy is intimate and applied personally to each of His children. Paul, writing to build restoration into the sin damaged Corinthian Church detailed some of the resources of mercy at their disposal. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,<sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God”* (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Paul understood that mercy grows comfort in the life of a damaged believer. Comfort finds a place of rest and peace in the Lord because mercy is the foundation of that comfort. Merciful comfort is also able to

be passed on to others who are suffering. Having received mercy and experienced God's comfort, the believer is equipped to introduce others to the merciful God who provides comfort to all who take trusting refuge in Him.

But the highest manifestation of God's mercy is seen in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ's humanity He suffered in every way that any person could suffer. In this way Christ identifies fully with mankind. *"Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people"* (Hebrews 2:17). In every aspect of Christ's divinity and humanity, He perfectly fulfilled all requirements by God to be our *merciful and faithful high priest*.

The fullest extent of Christ's merciful priestly role is seen in His work of *propitiation for sins* on the Cross. There was no other way in which God's wrath against our sin could be satisfied. In Romans 3:25, Paul explains that our merciful *"God put forward as a propitiation by his (Jesus') blood, to be received by faith..."* God the Father wanted to be appeased. He wanted to deliver to mankind the fullest possible expression of divine mercy that He could. So, He

presented His Son for the job of carrying our sin to the Cross where the Father would unleash His fury upon Him until He was appeased – propitiated – and calmed from wrath to peace. **Jesus Christ did this!**

When these truths are genuinely *received by faith*, a sinner has the blood sacrifice of Christ applied to them. **Romans 5:9-11** *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.* <sup>10</sup> *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.* <sup>11</sup> *More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

The believing sinner is transitioned from the state of being a dead enemy (Rom 5:10; Eph 2:1; Php 3:18) under the wrath of God to being forgiven (Col 2:13). They are cleansed (Ac 15:9), adopted into the beloved (Rom 8:15; Eph 1:6), gifted eternal life (Jn 3:16), indwelt by the sealing Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13), and gifted with Christ's righteousness (1Co 1:30). Such is the extreme nature of God's mercy in action for undeserving sinners. **God is Mercifully Good!**

## God is Wilfully Good

No subject challenges the human heart more than “*God’s will.*” Humanity demands their imagined rights, and claim to be masters of their own destiny, and in so doing they attempt to rob God of His will. Mankind claims to possess a dominant “*free will*” which usurps authority over any will that God may possess. No belief could be further from the truth or violate the nature of Yahweh more than this one.

In Exodus 33:19, God explains through the strongest form of emphatic statements that He has a “*will.*” “*I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy*” (Exo 33:19). It is unmistakable, Yahweh knows His own mind, and He knows precisely the things that He desires to become reality. God’s will is dominant, it is sovereign, it is all-knowing, and it is all-powerful. Jehovah’s will governs over all things. When He exercises His will, it happens. To ensure this, He employs His grace and mercy as He interacts with undeserving sinners.

This, in part, is why the church uses the word ‘*sovereign*’ to explain God’s will. The things that He wills to be, simply happen as expressions of His good and dominant character. If Yahweh did not wilfully determine to act out His grace

flowing from His mercy towards sinners, NOT a single human would ever receive salvation. Every person would remain dead in their sin (Ephesians 2:1), without the desire or the capacity to reach out to God for life (Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 3:10-11).

Humanity is dependent upon God's will. If mankind did possess a free will, as many claim, they would exercise that will to wish God out of their lives. Peter boldly confronted the crowd in Acts 2:22-23 with this truth. Peter preached; *"Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know - <sup>23</sup> this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."*

Mankind's unregenerate will is to get God out of their lives. Whereas God's will is to restore mankind to God. *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved"* (Ephesians 2:4-5). When we believers were spiritual corpses trapped in the graves of our sin, God *"willed"* to

change us when we had NO will of our own. Therefore, spiritual rebirth is ONLY possible by the merciful will of the one and only sovereign and loving God who chose to be our Saviour. Here we see God's grace, God's mercy, and God's will intersect in the most astounding act of God to bring about the salvation of sinners for His glory alone.

## **God is Wilfully Good!**

### **Psalm 100**

<sup>1</sup> *Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!*

<sup>2</sup> *Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!*

<sup>3</sup> *Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

<sup>4</sup> *Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!*

<sup>5</sup> *For **the LORD is good**; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.*

### **Application:**

~ Worship!

~ Evangelise!

~ Administer God's goodness to others!