



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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The Great Mercies of God Toward Us

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known (John 1:16-18).

God showed His great mercy to the Hebrew people when after 400 years of slavery in Egypt He led them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. During their slavery, every moment of every day they had to do what Pharaoh and their overlords told them to do. After 400 years of servitude, the Hebrews knew nothing of what it meant to live free and independent or how to govern themselves under just laws instead of a tyrant's whims. Therefore, in His great mercy, God gave the Hebrews the law through Moses so they could know right from wrong and know how to live in a joyful and loving relationship with God and others.

If they disobeyed God's law, in God's great mercy the LORD gave them festivals and sacrifices that would assure them of God's love and forgiveness, restore their love for God and one another, and point them toward their Savior to come—the Messiah, the Anointed One, the King of the universe. For these reasons and others, we read in Psalms 145:8-9, "The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made." For these and other good reasons, the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 145:10, "All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your faithful shall bless you;" that is, all Your faithful will bring You joy by how they live and by the way they love You and others.

Unhappily, the Hebrews and everyone everywhere have disobeyed the law of God in many ways. If they have not known God's law given through Moses, they have broken the law of God written on their hearts by God.

None of us can unbreak a law we have broken. We can ask for someone's forgiveness and try to make amends, but even that will not unbreak a broken law. Therefore, God sent His only begotten Son into the world to save the world and to save us from the true moral guilt that we have. Jesus Christ came into the world to give us the grace (mercy) of God that we need. Through Jesus, we have received truth and grace upon grace. In the Old Testament, the word *grace* is often translated *mercy*. Through Jesus Christ, God has given us the assurance that we can receive grace, mercy, forgiveness, and cleansing through faith in His Son. Only Jesus can make us into people who are totally forgiven and cleansed from all sin just as though we have never broken one of God's laws.

God could not fully display—disobedient as we have been—His grace, mercy, and love through the law that He gave Moses. Try as we might, we have not obeyed God's law in every situation. We deserve punishment for refusing to govern ourselves according to just and good laws given to us by our loving God for our benefit. The law shows us that we have not obeyed it, that we deserve punishment, and we need God's mercy and forgiveness.

God can fully display His justice by punishing those who have hurt others and dishonored God by their disobedience. God can fully display His grace by forgiving those who believe in and receive Jesus Christ as the Bible teaches. A just punishment will bring pain and eternal suffering to those who hate God and hurt others, but the pain and suffering of Jesus can substitute for the pain and suffering we deserve for our sins—*grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*. If we receive Jesus' suffering sacrifice in our behalf, we will not need to suffer forever to display God's justice.

To solve our most basic problems, God sent Jesus Christ to sacrifice His life for us. God the Father substituted the suffering and sacrifice of His Son for the just punishment we deserve so They could forgive us and do so with love, with *justice* and *mercy*. Together, justice and mercy express the love of God for those who have hurt others and for those they have hurt. Unhappily, all of us have hurt others and disgraced God, but God's love can heal those we have hurt, and God's grace can forgive us and restore us to sanity through the mercy of Jesus Christ.

Jesus died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven to bestow upon us even more mercies. He confirmed His promises and the truths He revealed about His Father, Himself and Their purposes when He rose from the dead. Now, Jesus gives great mercies from heaven to all who follow Him. From heaven, He has poured the Holy Spirit into everyone who believes in Him and receives Him as their personal Lord and Savior. He cleanses from sin all who trust in Him. He gives His power to His followers so they can live according to the law of God—so they can love God with all our heart, mind, soul, strength, and their neighbors as themselves.

We cannot love God, others, or ourselves without the love of God abiding in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who lives within all who follow Jesus. The Father gives us great mercy through Jesus, and God gave Jesus, the Son of God, the power to make us children of God. As the Father's adopted children, we can love God and others like Jesus did. In addition, through faith in Jesus we have received the gift of eternal life. The love and joy we receive from knowing God will remain within us forever. God will be with us and will love us and care for us forever. Yes. What the Psalmist revealed about God in Psalm 145:9, the Son of God revealed in human flesh, in the Gospel of John, through His Apostles, and throughout the New Testament: "The LORD is good to all, and His compassion is over all that He has made." Every word Jesus spoke was everlasting truth. In His every word and work, Jesus showed forth the love and grace of God because Jesus is our loving Savior. He came to save us from our sins, and He will someday completely save the world from sin when He returns as He promised.

We know that everything Jesus taught and everything Jesus did showed forth the true character and nature of God, whose love includes justice and mercy for all who will believe in and receive His Son as their Lord and Savior. As John reminds us, "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (John 1:16-18). We can trust Jesus and follow Him joyfully forever, because He is still close to the Father's heart and our heart. From Jesus, we have learned the truth about God, for Jesus is the Son of God, and Jesus has made us—those who believe in Him—children of God. — L. G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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