Old Testament Analysis: Grace, Mercy And Compassion Of God Towards His Creation Despite Their Sin And Disobedience

Introduction

God has shown mercy, grace and compassion towards his creation. Despite their sin, He has continued to pursue them asking that they turn away from sin. With receptive open arms when they turn away from sin, He welcomes them back. God has desired this obedience and worship from his creation from the time of Adam and Eve, through Jesus being on earth walking with humanity and being crucified. Even after such a horrendous death of his only begotten son, God still shows mercy, grace and compassion towards his creation when we turn away from sin and seek his face.

While the children of Israel were in the wilderness, God continued to show them mercy despite their murmuring and complaining. But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God. (NIV Nehemiah 9:31) God provides a way of escape even when we are not deserving, he shows us grace. Before the flood when all was wicked in the world God found one person, that he could use to save his creation and did bestow grace upon him. “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen 6:8). Even when sinful and disobedient God are shows compassion. Because of the Lord’s great love, we are not consumed (NIV Leviticus 3:22). The same God of the Old and New Testament shows grace, mercy and compassion. Often it is misrepresented that God of the Old Testament is wrathful, and angry with his creation and there is hope. This document will show how the God of the Old and New Testament hates sin but shows and continues to show grace, mercy and compassion towards his creation despite their sin and disobedience.

God of Mercy

Psalm 136 opening verse admonishes us to give thanks to the Lord for his mercy endures forever. This is echoed through the entire psalm. This is a communicable attribute of God that is evident in both Old and New Testaments. Mercy is a gift that God bestows upon humanity. As God will confront moral inequity, his mercy is the goodness in dealing with human suffering and guilt. Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed because His compassions fail not. (NKJV Lamentations 3:22)

Mercy for Jonah

One good example of God showing mercy towards the disobedient prophet Jonah. The first verse in the book, God tells Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach against their wickedness, however Jonah does the exact opposite retreats and boards a ship in Joppa that was going to Tarshish. It is noted that prophets have fled. Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there. (KJV I Kings 19:3) However, for Jonah this was basic disobedience. God told him to go to Nineveh but he refused.

As we progress through the story, Jonah's disobedience put others in danger. Then the Lord sent a powerful wind upon the sea, and there was such a big storm that the ship was about to break up. (NIV Jonah 1:4) By verse ten the men on the ship interrogate Jonah, to determine what he has done against God. So, they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the storm stopped. (NIV Jonah 1:15) From here Jonah finds himself in the belly of a whale, due to his disobedience. During his time in the whale he prays, and God is merciful and again gives Jonah the assignment to go to Nineveh, this time Jonah goes. Upon hearing the word from the Lord, the people of Nineveh repent. When God saw what they did, and that they turned from their sinful way, He changed His mind about the trouble He said He would bring upon them, and He did not destroy Nineveh. (NIV Jonah 3:10). What is so alarming is that Jonah became angry because God showed the people of Nineveh mercy. But is even more amazing is that Jonah never recognized that God had showed them mercy.

Psalm 103:1-22 (Exegetical Examination)

Introduction

Psalm 103 is a composition of praise honoring God's goodness and mercy towards all who are oppressed. The psalmist expresses his desire to give God praise because of the forgiveness of sin. That Gods love surpasses our understanding even when our behavior warrants punishment. The writer speaks of Gods compassion towards us just like a father would have towards his own children. A very unique analysis concerning Psalm 103, is that it shows how believers must often encourage ourselves and stand confidently on what God has done for us previously and what God will do in the future.

Historical Cultural

The book of Psalms also referred to as the "book of praise" is the longest book in the Bible, with Psalm 119 being the longest chapter in the bible. This book of poetry, praises and honors God, tells of the trial, tribulations, success and achievements in life that man has gone through and their relationship with God. Through these 150 chapters we have divine purpose which guides, discipline, alter our thoughts or attitudes and molds us to into being more like the God we serve. Despite being within the Old Testament, the psalms are often quoted within the New Testament and includes references to Jesus. For example, "They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." (NKJV Psalm 22:18) In the New Testament, John 19:23-24, we are given a description of how the soldiers took Jesus garments, divided and cast lots for them.

From an historical perspective, the book of Psalms was written over a 1000-year period, beginning with Moses through the time of Zechariah with seven authors which includes David. However, when it comes to denoting the actual time, place or setting for a psalm it varies. The writers were realist who used their personal reflections or mediations recognizing that life is less than perfect and at times difficult. at the time. It should be noted that through divine inspiration God guided the editing of the Psalters linking certain psalms into unified groups bringing them into five books which work together to reveal Gods story. The chart below shows the grouping of the books:

Books Psalms

1 1-41

2 42-72

3 72-89

4 90-106

5 107-150

Through the Psalms the story of God is told. Within this story there are different themes. Psalms 1-41, confidence in God; Psalms 42-72 discouragement; Psalms 73-89, starts out with hopelessness and ends with hope; Psalms 90-106, joyful confidence in God; Psalms 107-150, God guides his repented people.

Cultural

Psalms can be considered as Hebrew poetry written sometimes for private use, to express feelings of anguish, contrition or gratitude; at times for informal gatherings of believers for teaching and encouragement, praising God; and other times for formal worship service. Unlike poetry we are familiar with such as rhymes or meter. Hebrew poetry does not function in this manner its unique in that it operates on the basis of a parallelism. The process includes the second line plays off the first line either bolstering or restating in a different word the first lines thought this includes either completing or contrasting the thought. Through this poetic process scholars have agreed upon seven genres of Psalms. The seven are; Praise, Thanksgiving, Enthronement, Laments, Penitence, Imprecatory requests and Wisdom.

Another aspect of Psalms is the connections between psalms. This can be identified by the following: similar themes, repeated terms or phases, questions asked in one psalm and answered in next, an idea at the end of one psalm and flowing into the beginning of the next. This ability to recognize similar patterns, thoughts or themes can be helpful.

Literary Context

Psalm 103, is a song of praise written by David. Some of the characteristics of the psalm is its call to praise God, glorifying for who God is. Within every verse of this psalm David shows adoration towards God for his character or acts. David recalls all of the benefits that God has bestowed upon him, forgiveness, healing, preserving him and meeting all of his needs. Examination of Psalm 103, shows the word all is repeated nine times, and David talks about Gods steadfast love four times. Also, Psalm 103 is filled with figurative language, for example verse 11 “For as high as the heavens are above the earth so great is His faithful love towards those who fear Him.” Through this figurative language David paints a picture of the enormous love, mercy, and compassion that God has towards his people.

David’s focus in Psalm 103, is on God alone. There is no supplication or petition for anything. This Psalm acknowledges all of the benefits of serving God and why He is worthy to be praised. The praise within this psalm is very personal and heartfelt. Through the language that David uses its clear that he is reflecting on all that God has done for him personally and for Gods

people. Because of these benefits and all that God has done, giving God should be natural.

Content

- Psalm 103 (1-5) Personally I will Praise God

The opening verses can be considered as David's personal reasons to praise God. David in verses 1 & 2, opens with praising God with all that is within him. Verses 3-4 he recounts all of the reasons to praise God, forgives all sin, heals all diseases, redeems your life, crowns you with faithful love, and compassion. The figurative language used in verse 5, Gods satisfies us with is goodness, and our youth is renewed like an eagle. Shows the symbolism of freedom and rejuvenation.

- Psalm 103 (6-18) Everyone Praise God

Verses 6-18 offer various points. One is that God shows he is cares for those less fortunate. Verse 6 actually states; the Lord executes acts of righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. Verses 7 describes how God revealed himself to Moses and the Israel, through his acts. Through verses 8-12 we are reminded of benefits from God, which are not only on a personal level but for all. Gods compassion, faithful love, slow to anger, mercy, the removal of our sins. It should be noted that again there is figurative language. Verse 11, "For as high as the heavens are above the earth" and verse 12, "As far as the east is from the west". This figurative language describes Gods mercy and compassion towards humanity. Verses 13 through 16, David portrays God as a father, and humanity as its children. Further acknowledging that we are limited creatures, and really occupy a small space in comparison to Gods grand design. Verses 17 and 18, shows Gods love transcends from generation to generation, and that if we abide to Gods covenant, He will be faithful towards us. One note regarding verses 17 and 18, it shows attributes of Hebrew poetry, in that the thoughts of verse 17 is completed in verse 18.

- Psalm 103 (19-22) Worldwide Praise God

These final verses of Psalm 103, points to God being supreme over all. That God is the creator and ruler over all. His kingdom is the entire universe and he reigns over all, including angels, armies and servants. God rules over creation and deserves praise from his creation. Psalm 103 ends the same as it began, praising God.

Application

Psalm 103, has now requests, but only praises. Through this psalm David praises

God for righteousness, justice, compassion, mercy, salvation and love. Through the transition is evident, from individual, to a national to universal in praising God for his benefits. This speaks to the process that the New Testament disciples went through. The time spent with Jesus one on one and upon his ascension the disciples were given the great commission as stated in Matthew 28:18-20. This Psalm is relevant to everyone today, that we cannot and should not forget the benefits we receive from God, and we must praise Him not just for the benefits but for him being God.

Mercy for Saul of Tarsus

In the New Testament, God shows mercy for a Pharisee, who feels within himself he is serving God in then most glorious manner. He has made it his primary goal to rid God of all the blasphemers the followers of Jesus. It is unmistakably clear that God could have destroyed Saul, however this did not happen. On the road to Damascus, as he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. (NIV Acts 9:3-5).

What is unique is that after his conversion, Paul through his Epistles constantly reminds his readers of Gods mercy. For example, he begins his letter in 2 Corinthians 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.' (2 Cor 1:3) But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions it is by grace you have been saved. (NIV Ephesians 2:4-5) Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God this is your true and proper worship. (NIV Romans 12:1) Paul unlike Jonah acknowledged the mercy he received and made it his goal to ensure that others understood the mercy that God has showed them. This is the same as with David in Psalm 51:1 Where he acknowledges his sin, and asks God to show mercy towards him, This the start of recovery of the soul, an act that only God can do.

God of Grace

Just like mercy, Gods grace is another attribute that is displayed towards Gods people in the Old and New Testaments. Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving. Describing grace is simple, it is divine unmerited and applied to outcasts, the guilty and the wretched. Salvation through Jesus Christ is not permitted with out Gods grace. However, despite Gods promise of transgenerational punishment may appear problematic, it is also engulfed in grace, and forgiveness. the God of the Old Testament appearing wrathful, he did apply grace.

Grace for the Masses

One of the most profound examples of grace applied would be the Israelites. It is difficult to wonder understand why Gods chosen people are still around. God delivered his people from Egypt, and begin to establish them as a nation. After over four hundred years of enslavement and finally free obey in God should have been easy. However, it was not, Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. (NIV Exodus 32:7) By making a cafe idol the people had sinned against God. The LORD also said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and they are indeed a stiff-necked people. 10Now leave Me alone, so that My anger may burn against them and consume them. Then I will make you into a great nation.” (NIV Exodus 32 9-10) Because the people were not consumed God showed grace towards them. Yet it was underserving. God grace is what sustained the Israelites. Their disobedience caused God to apply both judgement and grace. For example, the Assyrians, are used to invoke judgement, but for the people who turned from sin, I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’ (NIV Isaiah 65:1) This type of cycle

continues for the Israelites but God continues to show them grace.

Another example of Gods divine Grace, is Jesus on the cross. God could have destroyed, everything and everyone for the brutal murder of Jesus. The only begotten son of God. This did not happen. Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' (NIV Luke 23:34) Jesus asked God to forgive them, thus God showed grace. Paul in 2 Timothy 1:9, provides clarity on grace. “He has saved us and called us to a holy life not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.” Even in the Old Testament we have seen many of God’s charismatic leaders called and chosen to do a work for God. But their sin, prevents them from fulfilling the mission despite this they still receive Gods grace. This same grace still applies to us today.

Gods Compassion

One of the first things that God reveals about Himself is that He is compassionate.

In Exodus 33:19, Moses desires to see Gods, glory however God lets Moses know “I will show compassion on whom I will show.” The compassion of the Lord, is that like the love of a father.

Compassion for A King

A very insightful display of Gods compassion is his actions towards king Hezekiah in 2 Kings. Hezekiah was obedient and faithful towards God. In chapter one Hezekiah became ill, and the prophet Isaiah told him “This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.” (NIV 2 Kings 20:1) Hezekiah immediately went into prayer reminding the God of how faithful he was. God showed Hezekiah compassion, and extended his life by fifteen years. Gods compassion has been bestowed upon his people, because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. (NIV Lamentations 3:22). Although infinitely holy, Gods compassion allows Him to deal gently with weak and failing people.

Jesus displayed this same compassion, in the New Testament. In Luke, Jesus sees a passing funeral processing and sees the mother. “Then the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.” (NIV Luke 7:13) At this point Jesus revives the woman’s son. Another example is that of the man with the withered hand, the leaper in stopping and addressing the needs of these individuals. Jesus showed tender sympathy for the sufferings and miseries for human frailty, and through of this compassion Jesus displayed God is ready and willing to forgive sins and restore people to Himself.

Conclusion

In conclusion God is the same yesterday and forever. In the Old and New Testaments God showed mercy, grace and compassion towards his people. Often this is done when the people have sinned against God and sometime when they have not. However, the key is God bestows upon us grace, mercy and compassion yet while we are undeserving. We are unable to earn this on our own. As the prophet Isaiah stated “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. (KJV Isaiah 64:6)