

## ***Session 6 God’s Beautiful Heart: Gracious and Merciful***

### **I. THE HIGHEST MANIFESTATION OF GOD’S BEAUTY: HIS EMOTIONS**

- A. Moses prayed to see God’s glory or beauty. God answered Moses by promising to reveal His goodness and to proclaim His Name. To proclaim the Lord’s name means to reveal His character or personality, especially His emotions. The pinnacle of God’s beauty is in His emotions.

***<sup>18</sup>Moses said, “Please, show me Your glory.” <sup>19</sup>Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you...” (Ex. 33:18-19)***

1. God has the best personality in the universe. He is very kind, good, pure, smart, mysterious, passionate, gentle, bold, humorous, etc. Imagine the privilege that Moses received as he heard “God preaching on God.” God will teach us about Himself forever.
  2. We can grow deeper in our understanding of each emotion that God has revealed about Himself by thanking Him for it, searching it out in Scripture, and sharing it with others.
  3. The result is that we live with the ***assurance that He enjoys us***, which leads to confident partnership with Him. When we have confidence before God, we run *to* Him instead of *from* Him in our weakness. We glorify God by receiving these aspects of His heart.
- B. The very pinnacle of God manifesting His glory is when He reveals His heart or emotions.
- <sup>6</sup>The LORD ...proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth”...<sup>14</sup>The LORD, whose name is Jealous... (Ex. 34:6, 14)***
- C. ***The LORD God***: First, God revealed His power and authority to direct the nations and our lives.
- D. ***The Lord is merciful***: The Lord is tender in relating to us in our weaknesses and sin. Mercy is the first aspect of His personality that He revealed to Moses; it is the one we need first and most. Some resist God’s mercy because it violates their sense of justice, knowing that they do not deserve it. At the cross, the Father satisfied the claims of justice. When we understand that Jesus bore our judgment and that justice has been satisfied, we can stand with confidence and receive mercy. The Lord delights in mercy. It is one of His favorite things to do in leading the universe.

***<sup>18</sup>Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity...He delights in mercy. (Mic. 7:18)***

1. God offers us a new start every day if we will repent of our compromises.  
***<sup>22</sup>Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.  
<sup>23</sup>They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (Lam. 3:22-23)***
2. God’s mercy in giving us forgiveness is far beyond anything we can compare it with.

***7Let the wicked forsake his way...let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him...for He will abundantly pardon. 8For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways... 9For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isa. 55:7-9)***

E. ***The Lord is gracious:*** He does not give us what we deserve. He is generous in how He evaluates our weak efforts to obey and serve Him. He remembers our frailty and does not reject us because of our weakness. We can be surprised and exasperated by our weakness, but God is not.

***10He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities...***

***14For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. (Ps. 103:10-14)***

1. He graciously evaluates us and rewards us for every small act of obedience (Mt. 10:42; Heb. 6:10). This dignifies and sanctifies every hour of our lives.
2. The smallest acts of devotion, service, obedience, and humility are esteemed and remembered by God forever, with reward, though they are weak, flawed, and imperfect.
3. David was confident in God's graciousness or gentleness. He knew that God delighted in him (18:19) and treated him with gentleness even in his failures (18:35).

***19...He delivered me [David] because He delighted in me...<sup>35</sup>Your gentleness has made me great. (Ps. 18:19, 35)***

F. ***The Lord is longsuffering:*** He bears long with us instead of "writing us off." God suffers long with our sinful responses to Him. He does not lose enthusiasm for us when we fail. His love for us is greater than the sadness we cause Him in the times when we intentionally resist Him. When we understand how much God suffers long toward us, then we can suffer long with others.

***4Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (Rom. 2:4)***

G. ***The Lord is abounding in goodness:*** He overflows with good plans for us (Rev. 21-22). God will not withhold His best from us in relationships, ministry assignments, finances (Ps. 84:11).

***11The LORD will give grace...no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly. (Ps. 84:11)***

H. ***Whose name is Jealous:*** God has emotion to protect His people and His relationship with them. God is love and is a consuming fire of holy desire. God's fire is connected to His jealous love. His jealousy means that He will give all and require all because of His love.

***24For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous [passionate] God. (Deut. 4:24)***

I. Jesus referred to Moses' encounter when promising to declare God's name to awaken love in us.

*<sup>26</sup>I [Jesus] have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them... (Jn. 17:26)*

- J. Paul referred to this experience in Moses' life (2 Cor. 3). As we see more of God's personality, our heart is liberated and transformed. The "beholding and becoming" principle teaches us that whatever emotions we behold about God's heart for us are imparted to our heart for God.

*<sup>18</sup>But we all...beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18)*

## II. GOD'S DELIGHTS IN SHOWING MERCY

- A. The Lord delights showing mercy to His people.

*<sup>18</sup>Who is a God like You, pardonning iniquity and passing over the transgression of... His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. (Mic. 7:18)*

*<sup>24</sup>"I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness...and righteousness...in these I delight..." (Jer. 9:24)*

- B. Mercy triumphs over judgment—spiritually, emotionally, relationally, physically, etc. In this verse, judgment speaks of unhelpful criticism, accusation, uncovering faults, whispering, etc.

*<sup>13</sup>Mercy triumphs over judgment. (Jas. 2:13)*

- C. At the dedication of Solomon's temple, the singers magnified God's mercy, God's glory filled the temple, and the priests could not stand to minister (2 Chr. 5:11-14).

*<sup>13</sup>...it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one...in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets...and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever," that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud <sup>14</sup>so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God. (2 Chr. 5:13-14)*

- D. After Solomon finishing praying at the temple's dedication ceremony, God's glory again filled the temple and the singers again magnified God's mercy (2 Chr. 7:1-3).

*<sup>1</sup>When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven...and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. <sup>2</sup>And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. <sup>3</sup>When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped...saying: "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever." (2 Chr. 7:1-3)*

E. “The Lord is good, His mercy endures forever” is the chorus that is recorded most in Scripture (1 Chr. 16:34, 41; 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11; Jer. 33:11; cf. Ps. 52:1; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 117:2; 118:1-4, 29; 138:8; 136:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26).

F. Jesus told the Jewish authorities to learn that God desires mercy (Mt. 9:13). He was calling them not to relate to people (like Matthew) on the basis of their sin and failure. A few months later, Jesus again emphasized to the Jewish leaders that He desired mercy and generosity (Mt 12:7).

*<sup>13</sup>“But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’” (Mt. 9:13)*

*<sup>7</sup>“But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.” (Mt. 12:7)*

### III. REPENTING WITH CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S TENDER HEART: A 5-FOLD REVELATION

A. Joel summoned the people to return to the Lord, giving *five reasons* why this is doable and wise. God is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness, and He relents from doing harm. He desires to make a way of deliverance. The knowledge of God’s heart for us gives us courage to tear our hearts in repentance. If we take one step toward Him, He will take ten steps toward us.

*<sup>13</sup>Return to the Lord...for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; He relents from doing harm. <sup>14</sup>Who knows if He will turn and relent...? (Joel 2:13-14)*

B. First, the Lord is gracious in that He evaluates us differently than anyone else. He remembers our frailty and that we are but dust (Ps. 103:14). He is not a harsh leader.

*<sup>10</sup>He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup>For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; <sup>12</sup>As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us... <sup>14</sup>For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. (Ps. 103:10-14)*

C. Second, the Lord delights in mercy (Mic. 7:18). He enjoys what is awakened in us when we understand that He gives us a new start after each failure.

D. Third, the Lord is slow to anger. God is not easily provoked with our weakness. He longs to forgive all who ask for it. Jesus spoke of His great patience to the church in Thyatira. He gave them time to repent of their immorality, and He does the same for us.

*<sup>20</sup>“...because you allow...Jezebel...to teach...My servants to commit sexual immorality... <sup>21</sup>I gave her time to repent of her immorality... <sup>22</sup>I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent...” (Rev. 2:20-22)*

- E. Fourth, the Lord has great kindness. When we believe in His kindness, we have confidence to press into deeper repentance, knowing that our repentance will never be met with rejection.
- <sup>4</sup>Do you despise the riches of His goodness [kindness], forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness [kindness] of God leads you to repentance? (Rom. 2:4)***
1. We can ask the Holy Spirit to help us to repent (2 Tim. 2:25)  
***<sup>25</sup>...if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, <sup>26</sup>and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil... (2 Tim. 2:25-26)***
  2. The Lord is so kind that He will forgive and forget our sin if we will repent of it.
- F. Fifth, the Lord relents from doing harm. God desires to relent from the judgment that the nations deserve. When a people repent, He sends blessing to that region.
- <sup>13</sup>Return to the Lord...for He is gracious...He relents from doing harm. (Joel 2:13)***