

Sharing God's Attitudes (Part 2)



Agreeing With God (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing on this week's inspiring—but also challenging—theme: Agreeing with God.

I've been sharing that this requires a radical change in our whole way of thinking. And you'll remember probably that probably that the Biblical word for that radical change in our thinking is repentance. I've suggested that there are four main areas that need to be included in this change in our thinking and I've listed them as follows: First, our objectives; second, our priorities; third, our attitudes; and fourth, our categories. Now, I've already spoken about objectives and I've suggested that two primary objectives of God are first, His own glory and satisfaction and second, excellence. And of course God would not be glorified by anything less than excellence. But excellence comes second because it's a kind of product of the first which is God's glory and satisfaction. That's the ultimate purpose for everything in the Universe including you and me is God's glory and satisfaction. And I quoted that statement which is so appropriate—"Anyone who does not exist for God's glory has no right to exist at all."

And then I spoke about two main priorities of God. The first, the coming of God's kingdom— "Thy kingdom thy will be done on earth."—the coming of God's kingdom to earth and second, the eternal before the temporal, especially in God's dealings in our lives. He always gives priority to the eternal over the temporal. He will never sacrifice the eternal to the temporal. He's always working in us to make us truly good people in an eternal sense.

Yesterday I shared on an attitude of God which I believe is very important—attention to detail—the small before the great and I gave examples from the teaching of Jesus. "He that is faithful in the least is faithful in much. He that is unfaithful in the least is unfaithful in much." God always checks us in the small things before He promotes us to the great things. And God cares for the smallest things in His universe. He's just as concerned about the atom, the neutron, the proton, as He is about the entire universe. He keeps His eye on every sparrow, even the fifth sparrow that was thrown in for free and He knows the number of the hairs on our head. Those are very small things but God attaches the greatest importance to each one of them. And if we're going to think like God, we have to attach importance to small things before

we even begin to think about great things.

Today I'm going to speak about another attitude of God which I believe is characteristic and important, and I could describe it this way, "As mercy combined with justice," or you could use "severity,"—"mercy and severity." So many people today cannot see these two things combined in God. In my thinking, they're like the two opposite sides of the same coin and unless each of them is there, you do not have a valid coin. So it is with God, mercy combined with justice or severity.

In Exodus 34, the Lord descended in a cloud for the benefit of His servant, Moses and He proclaimed His name. Now the name of God or the name of any person in Scripture always is a key to their nature. And so when God proclaimed His name to Moses, He was also revealing His nature to Moses. And so it's important to read the name of God as it's proclaimed there in Exodus 34, verses 5 through 7. It says this:

> "Then the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with Moses there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation.'" (NKJ)

There we see so clearly the two opposite sides of God's single nature—first on the one side, His mercy—on the other side, His severity or His sternness. And there are seven aspects of His mercy unfolded for us there. First of all, He's merciful. Second, He's gracious. Third, He's longsuffering or patient. Fourth, He abounds in goodness which is sometimes translated "steadfast love." Fifth, He abounds in truth which is also faithfulness. Sixth, He keeps mercy for thousands. And seven, He's willing to forgive iniquity, transgression and sin.

So there's seven aspects to God's mercy. But let none of us ever be blinded to the fact that this does not set aside God's judgment and His severity. And that is unfolded in the two last parts of that statement of God's name. He by no means clears the guilty and He visits the iniquity of one generation to the following three generations if they're wicked toward God. So you can dwell on the mercy of God forever and His saints and His redeemed are going to. The psalmist said, "I will sing of the mercy of the Lord forever." But at the same time you must never be blinded to the fact that there is another side to God which is manifested when He sees fit. And that's His severity and His judgment.

These opposites run all through the Bible. Some people got the idea in the Old Testament God was severe and in the New Testament He wasn't. That's completely incorrect. In Isaiah 45:21, God says:

> "There is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Savior." (NKJ)

Those are the two aspects. He exercises justice but He's also willing to save. Everyone of us has got to relate to God either as Savior or as the Just Judge of all the earth.

And then in Romans 11:22, Paul says this:

> "Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off." (NIV)

So there you are, right in the New Testament—the kindness of God but also the sternness of God. One does not do away with the other. It's very important that you and I understand these two aspects of God's nature, His kindness, but also His severity—that He's a Savior but also a Judge. And the reason why it's important is because God expects you and me to have the same attitude in these things that He has.

In Psalm 97, verse 10, the psalmist says:

> "You who love the Lord, hate evil!" (NKJ)

Notice, there are two strong words there—love and hate. The psalmist says, if you claim to love the Lord, there's a corresponding attitude that must be manifested in you which is hating evil; so there in your character, there must be the two same opposite sides of the coin—loving the Lord but hating evil. If you love the Lord, you cannot compromise with evil. It's impossible. It's inconsistent. We must never assume that God's mercy sets aside His judgment. So many people are making that mistake today—Christian theologians, ministers and others.

Listen to what Peter says in his second epistle, chapter 3, verses 6 through 10. He discusses this very issue and he's speaking about God's judgments on the world. He speaks about the flood first:

> "By water also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. [That was the flood.] By the same word the

> present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. [There is a day of judgment ahead.] But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. [So the Lord is not in a hurry. He is long suffering. Peter goes on:] The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. But He's patient with you, [That's what He said to Moses. He was patient.] not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. [God's patience will not ultimately set aside His judgment on wickedness. What a day that will be:] The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. [Including the consciences of men. And then he goes on a little further in the same chapter:] So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation…" (NIV)

It means salvation for those who meet His condition but it does not set aside judgment for those who reject His mercy. So, Peter warns Christians. He says, "Because God's judgment seems to be delayed, don't imagine that it's been canceled." God is simply giving all of us an opportunity to get ready to be reconciled with God before the judgment comes.

And there, here in closing, is an example of the wrong attitude in man. It's taken from Ecclesiastes 8, verse 11.

> "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (NKJ)

So because people don't see God's judgment immediately manifested, they think God is not going to judge and they can safely go on in evil. But that is a complete misunderstanding of God's attitude which is a combination of mercy and severity.

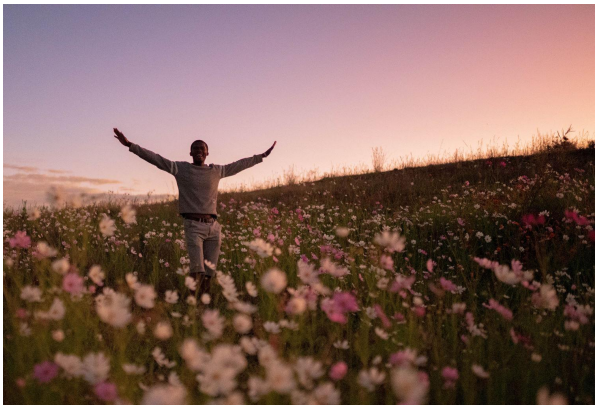
Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about Thinking in God's Categories.

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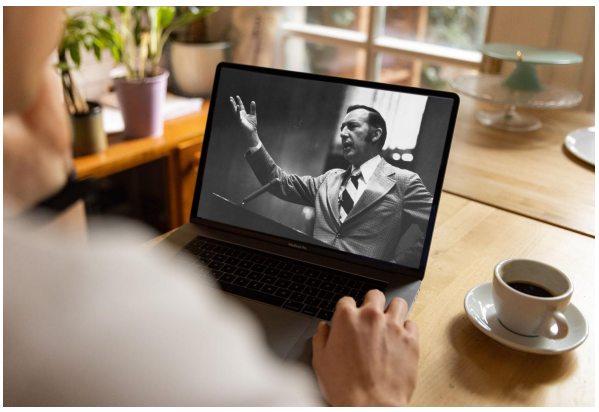
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