

1. 108 Ps.
2. 116 Ps. 2^d pt.
3. 117 Ps. 1st pt.

THE HOLLY PAPER CO. PA.
The Mercy of God Preëminent.

80807

For thy mercy is great above the Heavens. "

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244 #27

244 = 3147

Ps. 108: 4.

There is an erroneous view adopted by many in regard to the mercy of God, which confounds it with His Goodness. Now it is true that there is no such thing as Mercy conceivable aside from Goodness:— the very idea of Mercy implies Goodness. But there most certainly may be such a thing as goodness without mercy. The error arises from the inaccuracy with which we make use of words to express our views and thoughts. To clear the subject then of all vagueness, and indefiniteness, let it be remembered that mercy always presupposes in the object toward which it is exercised, the idea of guilt. Hence it would be wholly

inappropriate to speak of God showing mercy to the Good and Innocent. He is good to all; He is good to Angels; He was good to Adam in Eden; but He does not regard Angels as objects of Mercy; He did not regard Adam ^{in his state of innocence} as an object of Mercy.

There are two classes of individuals only who are regarded ^{By the great God} with Mercy; they are (1) His own children, who, ^{even} with ~~all~~ their renewal of nature, and partial Sanctification, are still full of imperfections, and in whom, that is, in whose flesh "dwelleth no good thing." They need the constant application of God's Mercy, and no class ~~of~~ is more ready to acknowledge their need than they; and accordingly their prayer is, ^{either} "Let thy mercy be upon us according as we hope in thee!"

or when overtaken, & overwhelmed by the power of temptation, they have been forced to cry out from the depths of their spirit in the agony of bitter spiritual sorrow: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions!"

2. The other class to whom mercy can be extended, is that of the impenitent, guilty, undeserving sinner. The "Divine Mercy, therefore, is not mere Divine Goodness." There is then, good reason why the distinction should be drawn. Men who are living in their sins, are constantly confounding the two things, and are secretly indulging a kind of vague hope that God is so good that He will not condemn them, although they

are guilty. Let men learn that Mercy is only exercised towards the guilty, and that in a way that is not founded upon any principle that they can control, that it is free, and not to be bought, that it is an act of sovereignty, dependent only upon God's Will, and they can then see that it is a condition full of peril for them to hope in God's goodness which they confound with His mercy. The goodness of God pervades all the Universe save one spot; He would make all His creatures happy except one class; that place is Hell; that class consists of Devils; in that deep dark dungeon of Despair His goodness does not will not go; to that lost class

it is not - never will be displayed; There
Hope that visits all the living never
comes; there, mercy that is bestowed upon
the living, erring ~~cl.~~ of men, never enters.
But the mercy of God will be readily under-
stood when it is known to be "the ^{exerc-}~~best~~
^{cise} ~~ness~~ of God's benevolence, ~~of~~ ^{His} good-will,
toward those who do not deserve it, &
in especial manner, toward those who
have merited anger and punishment."
So that, ^{in the exercise of mercy,} there are requisites on both
sides; "there must be unworthiness, and
criminality in the recipient, and goodwill
in the bestower. Three consequences follow
from this representation of mercy: 1. Had
mercy never been exercised toward man,
^{none of} ~~all~~ God's attributes would have been dishonored.

2. No injustice would have been done to man.

3. No cry of complaint could ^{ever} have come up from the fathomless depths of his misery, through the perpetual duration of his despairing Eternity.

There is however another misconception in regard to Mercy, against which it were well to guard ourselves. While we hold up God's mercy as wonderfully preëminently glorious, there is danger that we may seem to exalt this attribute at the expense of all the rest. The danger does not affect the true children of God. They are not the persons who exalt God's Mercy above His Justice Holiness and Truth. It is the impenitent sinner who does this, and the

direct result of such a ~~presentation~~^{view} of God's
mercy is to make it appear that sin
is a small evil; that prayer is unnecessary;
that God "is indifferent to his laws"; that
God's justice may be set aside; that He
is not so terrible in His wrath against the
evil doer as He is represented. All this
arises from false views of Mercy; making
it so entirely to absorb the Divine etc.
that He has left no room for the exercise
of Justice Holiness & Truth; and turning
His Eternal Moral Gov^t into a scene
of anarchy; and giving to Mercy such a
licentiousness as would convert the
world into a Pandemonium, and thus
instead of being mercy, it would be
the height of unkindness & cruelty.

Let us therefore be understood fairly
in the utterance of the proposition
that "God's Mercy is Preëminent."

We detract not a hair's weight from
the grandeur ^{+ glory, + excellence} of His other Attributes. There
let them stand in all their sublime and
unapproachable magnificence, as the
distinctive traits of the inconceivable God.

His Wisdom is infinite; His Power is
infinite; His Holiness is infinite; His
Justice is infinite; His Truth is infinite;
How then can we form any conception
of Mercy higher than this? This quality
of Infinity admits of no degrees;—one
thing cannot be more Infinite than
another; Each therefore is to be understood
as occupying its own Infinite, eternal, &

unchangeable sphere, and while each is
of the other independent, yet at the same
time, all combine most harmoniously
to make up the glorious xter of that
almighty Being whom we hold to be God.

But for all this, we hold also that there
is a peculiar grandeur and glory about

God's Mercy that belongs to no other, of
His attributes. ^{By way of explanation of this position we} For example, ^{remark} God's Omnipotence

has one sort of eminence, but it is
that which is peculiar to itself and does
not hold that high rank in God's xter
that is possessed by Mercy & many others.

So of the rest there may be ^{scarcely} no difference
in point of infinity, in any of them but
there is something peculiar to ~~it~~ ^{each} and
some surpass others in attractiveness. Having

prepared the way by this general statement we
add now 2^{dly} All God's attributes in their
application to His creatures do not
produce "the same wondrous views, and
the same elevation of sentiments" as others.
Now we have only to reflect that this
mercy is applied to us; that we are
its beneficiaries; that its results to us
are to be infinitely blissful & glorious;
and then the conclusion will be very
natural that of all God's Attributes, His
Mercy is preëminently attractive and
that it "is Great above the Heavens."

We are in a grand amphitheatre of natu-
ral scenery; range after range of towering
mountains rise around & stretch far
away in the dim distance ^{are projected} ~~through~~

upon ~~the~~ the circling ^{azure} ~~horizon~~ of the ~~Heavens~~ ^{sky}

and as peak after peak seems to pierce
the very Heavens, we are lost in admira-
tion of the grandeur of the scene, and feel
the influence of its sublimity. Yet while there
may be grandeur in the projections, and
while some may lift their tall forms or great
crags and precipices of many ~~shapes~~
and others may belch forth ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~an~~ ^{an} eruption, yet
^{when} the eye rests upon one that stands on
the circle, a green & flowery mound, with
gentle ascent, and crowned to the summit
with the deep dark green of the forest,
it is with a silent satisfaction that the spirit
clings to that as the congenial home of thought
and hope and peace. So of mercy in the
comparison with God's other glorious attri-
butes; they may tower aloft in unapproach-
able magnificence & we can stand and

in silent wonder ~~adore~~ ^{admire} them as the per-
fections of our adosable God, exclaiming
"O Lord my God thou art very Great!"
yet we turn away from Sinai with
its vengeful thunders & lightnings
and even from Calvary while the
palpable darkness of God's abandon-
ment of his Son, envelopes the awful
mount, and we go "to the Mount Zion,
the city of the living God, and to the Heaven-
ly Jerusalem" as the blessed mercy seat
and there lull into the sweet repose
of a ~~Father's~~ ^{Father's} gracious forgiveness
all the perturbations of our anxious
spirits. It is thus that we make
it apparent that the Mercy of
God is preeminently attractive to the

Children of Men. But the grandeur of this most attractive & interesting theme needs to be much more minutely developed that our devotional sentiments may be fully aroused and nurtured. Accordingly we establish its preëminence from ~~the~~ several arguments among which we mention,

1. The testimony of God Himself, in His word, & in His dealings with men. It may be stated without any danger of doing violence to the word of God, that He manifests a special pleasure in the exercise of Mercy.

He of course delights in the exercise of all His attributes, but the statement we make in regard to His special delights in Mercy may be made plainer by a reference to

the process which is going on in the mind of every one who is rightly influenced. For example: Here is one who is a good citizen & subject to the Laws of his country, and as such, he loves to do all that is required of him; to preserve the peace and security of all; to uphold the authority of Law; to repress disorder and violence, by actual personal influence.

You may however suppose another case which will carry this idea still further.

It is that of one who instead of evermore appealing to Law & authority, to restrain the disorderly, & to protect the innocent, seeks to ~~inspire~~ ^{infuse into} all parties ~~with~~ the principles of virtue, industry, and order by education, & thus render them so contented intelligent & happy that they would govern themselves without Law. Now

Which of these cases is the more attractive, & in which of these sets of influences would a right-thinking man take most delight? It is easy to perceive that while the first is good - the last is better. Again, there is one who does justice ~~to all~~ in his intercourse with all men associated with him; even justice; no complaint can be made of him; he is an upright, honest, and blameless man. But you may readily suppose a case carried a degree beyond this, when a man is not satisfied with doing justly, ^{but} also loves mercy, and shows it by bestowing his goods to feed the poor, drying the orphan's tear, and causing the widow's heart to sing for joy." In which of these ~~cases~~ is there most to delight and attract? Undoubtedly in the last. So now God delights in

all His attributes, but it does seem from the very nature of God Himself that He must take His chief delight in Mercy. Justice, Truth, & Holiness are infinitely pleasing to Him but Mercy is peculiarly His delight. What else would He have us understand by the language; "As I live" &c. "Why will ye die?" "God so loved the world," &c. and the hundreds of other passages wherein he is represented as a Merciful God? Much is said ^{in the Bible} about God's other attributes, & much too that proves that God glories in them. But ~~that~~ ^{it} cannot fail to strike you as you read His word that there is a peculiarity in the manner of his speaking about Mercy, proving that it is only thro' Mercy that you get a glimpse of the Divine heart. He never speaks of Mercy as

"strange work:" but He does speak of Justice
in its execution, and judgment & vengeance
as His "strange work." He has no pleasure
in them — He is Love — so Mercy
is His very bliss. And oh, fellow sinner,
you have the proof of this in His dealings
with you! You refuse, reject, and even spurn
His Mercy; and yet He follows you with it
until the last moment when you cross the
invisible "line, which marks the destiny of man for
glory or despair;" then you know how
Jesus acted (who was Jesus?) when the Jews reject-
ed him, & he knew that they would be destroy-
ed for their wickedness; how he stood on
the brow of Olivet, & wept exclaiming, "O Jerusa-
lem, Jerusalem!" &c I establish the preëminence
of Mercy, however, by reference

II. To the testimony of God's word. This indeed, is the object of this Book, and strange as it may appear to you, God's saving mercy is taught nowhere else. Some combat this position by assuming that we know God to be merciful from our moral Constitution:— God has made us so that we regard mercy as an excellence;— if so, we are made so as to ascribe it to Him, since He could not be perfect without that which we regard as a perfection.

But there is in this no instruction as to how He regards Sin. A ^{Ph.} ~~Greekian~~ without God's word doubted whether He ^d pardon —

Some say we can learn it from our daily experience of His goodness, ^{and that this} teaches us ^{His Mercy} ~~this~~ apart from the Bible — But this cannot teach us whether He will pardon Sin. This only

tells of outward good & this is forsaking us as
we realize the affecting description 12 Ch. Ecc.
& so we would be more likely to learn from
this that things w^o. grow worse & worse
in Eternity.

Some say that God's goodness & Benevolence
w^d teach His Mercy without the Bible. Oh
so we may learn He is good by looking
abroad upon the earth everywhere &c but
what about Storms — Earthquakes — famines
pestilences — eruptions of Volcanic Mts. the
death of infants, &c? All we see here teaches
^{just as much} us, that He is a God of Vengeance as He is
of Mercy — The fact is that the Mercy
of God in saving sinners is so grand a
development of His Benevolence, that
^{material} All worlds & all their glories can never show it.

and it is to be found no where else but
here in this Book. But I establish it
III By the manner of its display. The Plan of
salvation shows it, & nothing else could. No other
attribute ever required such a plan. "The incar-
nation, life, and death of the Son of God:"—

Assuming our form & flesh, "in a manner miraculous, in-
timate, & eternal"— "not as he — Stable — Poor —

Parents flying ^{with him} from those who would murder him — eating
His bread &c. fatigue, hunger — was tempted — healed
the sick — preached to the poor — wept in their
sorrows — persecution — death agony distress
on Cross — Gethsemane &c

This was God's Son that did all
this! Why? to show God's Mercy!
Nothing like it ever was done be-
fore in this world or in any