

Psalms 103:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

Analysis

God's fatherly compassion toward those who fear Him provides intimate, relational context for mercy. The Hebrew 'pities' (racham) shares a root with 'womb,' suggesting motherly tenderness. This parental imagery grounds theology in relationship, not mere legal transaction. The Reformed understanding of adoption recognizes that believers aren't merely pardoned criminals but become God's beloved children. Christ taught us to pray 'Our Father' (Matt 6:9), establishing this intimate relationship as central to the gospel.

Historical Context

In ancient patriarchal society, a father's compassion toward his children was expected and valued. David, an imperfect earthly father, understood both human and divine fatherhood. His own failures as a father perhaps deepened his appreciation for God's perfect fatherly compassion.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does understanding God as your compassionate Father transform your approach to prayer and obedience?
2. What aspects of earthly fatherhood help or hinder your understanding of God's fatherly love?

Interlinear Text

רַחֵם	אָב	עַל	בְּנֵי יִם	רַחֵם	יְהוָה	עַל
pitieth	Like as a father	H5921	his children	pitieth	so the LORD	H5921
H7355	H1		H1121	H7355	H3068	

יִרְאַיוֹ:
them that fear
H3373

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 103:17 (References Lord): But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

Jeremiah 31:20 (References Lord): Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.

Proverbs 3:12 (References Lord): For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

Jeremiah 31:9 (Parallel theme): They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Malachi 4:2 (Parallel theme): But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Psalms 147:11 (References Lord): The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Matthew 6:32 (Parallel theme): (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Psalms 103:11 (Parallel theme): For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

Acts 13:26 (Parallel theme): Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

Matthew 6:9 (Parallel theme): After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.