

Psalm 116:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

Analysis

Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. After describing deliverance from death (v.3-4) and God's hearing his cry (v.1-2), the psalmist declares three attributes of God that together explain divine deliverance: grace, righteousness, and mercy.

"Gracious is the LORD" (חָנָן יְהוָה/channun Yahweh) begins with channun, meaning gracious, compassionate, merciful. This adjective derives from chen (grace, favor)—unmerited kindness, undeserved goodness, favor shown to those who cannot claim it. God's graciousness means He acts in love toward the undeserving. This attribute appears in God's self-revelation to Moses: "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious" (Exodus 34:6).

"And righteous" (צַדִּיק/vetzaddik) adds essential complement. Tzaddik means just, righteous, ethically straight. God's righteousness means He always acts consistently with perfect justice and holy character. He never violates His own standards, never compromises truth, never acts unjustly. Some suppose grace and justice conflict—if God is gracious, He overlooks sin; if righteous, He cannot show mercy. But Scripture insists both are true simultaneously.

The conjunction "and" connects these seemingly opposite attributes. God doesn't alternate between grace and justice or balance them mathematically. Rather, His grace operates through His righteousness. At the cross, this integration appears perfectly: God's righteousness judged sin fully (Christ bore penalty); God's grace provided substitute freely (Christ died voluntarily). Romans 3:26 declares God "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"—simultaneously righteous

and gracious.

"Yea, our God is merciful" (וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶרְחֵם / ve'Eloheinu merachem) concludes with third attribute. Racham means to have compassion, show mercy, feel pity. It derives from rechem (womb), suggesting motherly compassion—tender, protective, nurturing care. The possessive "our God" personalizes these attributes—not merely theological truths but experienced realities. This is OUR God, the One we know personally through covenant relationship.

Together, these three attributes explain the psalm's experience: grace (God gives undeserved favor), righteousness (God acts consistently with His character in delivering His people), mercy (God compassionately responds to human need). The psalmist didn't deserve rescue, yet God graciously delivered him. This deliverance didn't violate God's justice but fulfilled His covenant promises. God's mercy moved Him to respond compassionately to desperate prayer.

Historical Context

These three divine attributes appear repeatedly in Old Testament God-descriptions. Exodus 34:6-7 presents fullest revelation: "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Notice both mercy and justice coexist.

Israel experienced these attributes throughout history. God's grace delivered them from Egypt (Exodus 2:23-25). His righteousness required wilderness wandering when they rebelled (Numbers 14:26-35). His mercy preserved remnant through exile and restored them (Jeremiah 30:11). Prophets proclaimed both judgment (God's righteousness) and restoration (God's grace and mercy).

Ancient Near Eastern gods were typically capricious—showing favor arbitrarily, punishing capriciously, acting inconsistently. Worshipers attempted to manipulate gods through elaborate rituals and offerings. In contrast, Yahweh revealed Himself as consistently gracious, righteous, and merciful—acting according to revealed character, not arbitrary whim. This provided assurance: Israel could count on

God's faithful character.

Intertestamental Judaism emphasized God's mercy. Apocryphal books frequently appeal to divine compassion (Wisdom 11:23-26; Sirach 18:8-14). Rabbinic tradition taught God created world by justice but sustains it by mercy. The Talmud records debates balancing divine justice and mercy, concluding both operate perfectly.

New Testament supremely demonstrates these attributes converging at the cross. Christ's sacrifice satisfied divine righteousness (sin's penalty paid fully) while extending divine grace (salvation offered freely) and demonstrating divine mercy (God compassionately providing what we couldn't achieve). Paul writes: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Grace, righteousness, and mercy unite in Gospel.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How can God be simultaneously gracious (showing unmerited favor) and righteous (requiring perfect justice)?
2. What does it mean practically that 'our God is merciful,' and how should this affect how we approach Him in prayer?
3. How does the cross demonstrate all three attributes—grace, righteousness, and mercy—operating together?
4. Why is it significant that the psalmist declares these attributes based on personal experience ('our God') rather than abstract theology?

Interlinear Text

מְרַחְמָן: יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה
is merciful is the LORD and righteous yea our God is merciful

H2587

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H7355

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 145:17 (Righteousness): The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

Ezra 9:15 (Righteousness): O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

Psalms 86:15 (Grace): But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

Psalms 119:137 (Righteousness): Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.

Psalms 103:8 (Grace): The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

Nehemiah 9:8 (Righteousness): And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous:

1 Timothy 1:14 (Grace): And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Daniel 9:14 (Righteousness): Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

Daniel 9:7 (Righteousness): O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the

countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

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