



Spirit of Grace Herald

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Spirit of Grace Ministries

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God's "Self-Definition"

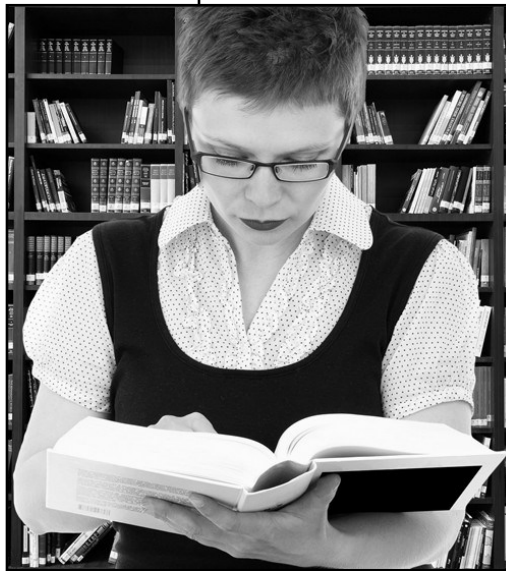
If we were asked to describe ourselves in a few words, we might have a hard time knowing what to say. Many people don't realize it, but God did this very thing about Himself. It all started when Moses presented an unusual request to God. He asked Him to show him His glory. God replied thus: "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you." (Exodus 33:19). The Bible tells us:

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty..." (Exodus 34:6-7)

In a few words that would take about half a minute to recite, God reveals His nature and His attributes to Moses. We do not have to wonder or guess or speculate about the nature of God; we have it in His own words. God describes His nature, the

attributes that define Him. The first two on the list are good news to humanity. He tells us that He is "merciful and gracious." To be merciful is to be kind to people who do not really deserve kindness. God's mercy and grace reach their ultimate expression with the sending of Jesus Christ into the world to die for our sins. Paul writes:

But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. (Titus 2:3-6)



Thousands of years before Jesus arrived, God was tipping His hand to Moses that He had good intentions for His creation. God is surely YHWH God, merciful and gracious. And then God tells Moses, and all the rest of us, that He is longsuffering. He puts up with a lot from His errant, dull, easily straying children. When we look at our dysfunctional world, and all the crime, sensuality, rebellion, and irreverence that is continually on display, it's a wonder God can stand us at all. And yet God is longsuffering, patiently bearing

with our terrible attitudes and wicked behavior.

God tells Moses that He is "**abounding in goodness and truth.**" So far, God's "self-description" is wonderfully positive. Everything He is saying about Himself is good news to us all. We sing "God is good all the time," and it turns out, from His own mouth, that God is not merely good; He abounds with goodness, which means He has a whole bunch of goodness. His abundant goodness moves Him to even to bless those who are not His children. Jesus tells us that God "**makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.**" (Matthew 5:45).

God's "Self-Definition"

The major reason people do not come running to Jesus as soon as they hear about Him, is that they doubt the goodness and kindness of God. They fear that Jesus would cramp their style. They couldn't enjoy all the pleasures they currently enjoy if they were to become real Christians. They are doubting the goodness of God. What they are saying, at least inwardly, is, "I could have more fun, have a better life, have a happier life, have a more fulfilling life away from God than I could ever have as a disciple of Jesus Christ."

This is, of course, nonsense. The people most satisfied with their lives and most content with their circumstances are those who are fully committed, born-again, praying, Bible-reading, evangelical Christians. They typically have better marriages, less conflicts, more contentment, and a far deeper sense of purpose than their secular, non-believing neighbors.

In the latter part of God's self-description, He finally speaks of His severity toward those who reject Him or turn from His ways. After declaring all these overwhelmingly positive attributes, God says of Himself: **"by no means clearing the guilty."** God does not clear wicked, unbelieving people who live for themselves and refuse to bow to the Lordship of Christ. After giving us a list of God's loving attributes, He feels it necessary to remind us that He is nobody to trifle with. We must not take God's goodness for granted and assume that because He is merciful and abounds with goodness, we can live as we like, we can freely break His commands. And so God essentially declares, "I by no means clear those who reject me, flaunt my laws, and refuse to submit to My Son, Jesus Christ."

By putting our faith in Jesus, and making God's will our highest priority, we will experience God's goodness in this life and in the next. As David wrote, **"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."** (Psalm 23:6).

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We need and we appreciate your generous support of this ministry. Whether sponsoring missions in Africa, creating YouTube Bible studies or devotional talks, sharing food with African widows, providing clothes and school supplies to African orphans, or sponsoring medical clinics in Kenya and Nigeria, the goal is always the same: to honor Jesus Christ and minister to people in His name.

FRIENDS OF GRACE—We have a program we call "Friends of Grace." This is simply a commitment to support our ministry at a level of \$300 per year. This can be done by making monthly donations of \$25, or making a one-time annual gift of \$300. We depend on our gracious God to move on your hearts to enable us to keep doing this important work of teaching the word of God, ministering to the Africans, and proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world.

