



[Luke 1:77-79](#)

(77) To give knowledge of salvation to His people
By the remission of their sins,
(78) Through the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;
(79) To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace."
New King James Version

No [salvation](#) is possible without [forgiveness](#). Our Father cannot forgive our sins on the grounds of justice, and therefore He does so through His tender mercy. He has made Himself our [God](#) by giving us grace—undeserved favor. He passes by the transgressions of His people because He delights in mercy. He is so full of pity that He delays to condemn us in our guilt, but looks with loving concern upon us to see how He can turn away His wrath and restore us to favor.

[Micah 7:18](#) adds, "Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy." God is [love](#), and love is kind, but perhaps our approach to His forgiveness has been prosaically legal. The Scriptures reveal that God does [kindness](#) with intensity of will and readiness of mind. He forgives with all His heart because He delights in mercy! He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies." God's nature works to give mercy, not punish; to create beauty, not destroy; to save, not lose.

Can we not see a lesson in this? Are we anywhere near God's image in this? How many of us, fellowshiping among God's people, are hiding resentment and bearing the seeds of bitterness against a brother because of some offense—or carrying a grudge, or filled with envy, or communicating gossip? Are these things acts of kindness? Does a forgiving spirit that delights in mercy enter into acts that destroy a brother's reputation and widen existing divisions?

One other phrase in [Luke 1:78](#) shows the kind and tender nature of our God: "He visited us." God did not merely pity us from a distance, nor did He allow His compassion for us to remain as an unresolved, inactive feeling. [David](#) writes in [Psalm 8:4](#), "What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?" But God did just that!

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed he does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of [Abraham](#). Therefore, in all things He had to be made like his brethren, that He might be a [merciful](#) and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. ([Hebrews 2:14-18](#))

God has not merely pitied us from a distance, but He has entered into life, our life, on our level. The Creator stooped from His high and pure abode as glorious God, and veiled His divinity for an abode of animated clay. He assumed our nature, was tempted in all things like us, took our sicknesses, and bore our infirmities for the express purpose of being a merciful and faithful High Priest. He did not enter into our world and yet maintain a status superior to us. He truly walked in our shoes and still went about doing good.

[Christ](#), Paul adds in [Galatians 1:4](#), "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." Who knows how many individual acts of kindness—from the conception of the plan to its fulfillment—are contained within this simple statement?

This is the heart of God's nature. He generously and mercifully gives that others might benefit. Now, because of what He did, this nature is growing in us. By His Spirit He has taken His abode in us to enable us to work out our salvation, and as we yield, our lives are changing, gradually conforming to His image. He dwells in us despite all our provocations, stubbornness, neglect, and rebellions. How often we must disappoint Him, and yet as our High Priest and Intercessor, He stands ever ready to serve us with yet more kindness.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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