

## The Christ Of Compassion & Commands?

We all like to receive compassion. We want to be looked upon with a favorable eye by others. We desire to have the mercy and concern of our friends and neighbors. However, we rarely want to be told what to do. We tend to reject conditions put upon the help of others. We resist requirements attached to compassion. So it is with our relationship to the Lord.

Many folks seek God's grace (Eph. 2:8-9). They want the benefits of the blood of the Lamb (Jn. 1:29, 34; Eph. 1:7). This, in-and-of itself, is not bad. We should seek the compassion of Christ (cf. Acts 3:19)! But, we must understand that the mercy and grace of our Lord is not dispensed like rain from the sky (cf. Matt. 5:45). In other words, God does not forgive independent of man's actions and attitude.

God requires certain things from man. For instance, in Ephesians 2:8-9, man is required to have faith. God's mercy is not merited, but there are conditions for receiving it. Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all who "obey Him" (Heb. 5:9). We must meet God's conditions, keep His commands, before His spiritual compassion, saving grace, will be applied to us.

It is unfortunate, but most people are not willing to accept both sides of this coin. They want the Christ of compassion, but not the Christ of commands (Jn. 14:15). They want the Lord of love, but not the Lord of law (1 Cor. 9:21). They say, "Yes, Jesus, I need your justification," while at the same time refusing to submit to His conditions: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (Jn. 8:24; Acts 3:19; Lk. 12:8-9; Mk. 16:16).

Moreover, there are some willing to obey the "elementary" commands, but reject the demand of diligence. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who DILIGENTLY seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). "Oh, yes, Lord, I will follow the New Testament pattern for salvation, but anything else is too much," they say with their actions and attitudes. Some harbor envy, hatred, and resentment, while others want to drink alcohol, dance, and dress seductively--all of which is sinful (Gal. 5:19-21). They want the world and heaven too (1 Jn. 2:15-17; Jas. 4:4)!

Further, some want to bask in the sunshine of His love, but balk at the idea of laboring in that sun (Matt. 20:1-4). Let us understand clearly that

our rest is in heaven, not on earth (Heb. 4:9). "For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent [labor, KJV] to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience" (Heb. 4:10-11).

Finally, it is incumbent upon us to receive Christ on His terms, not ours (Col. 2:6-7). If we seek His compassion, we must also be willing to submit to His commands. Without one, we cannot have the other.

Steven F. Deaton