

Everlasting Mercy and Enduring Faithfulness

May 8, 2021 Scott Gunn

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise; *
give thanks to him and call upon his Name.
For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; *
and his faithfulness endures from age to age. — Psalm 100:3-4*

What's not to love about Psalm 100? It's short, full of evocative imagery, and joyous. In just four verses, we get an invitation to praise God, along with some excellent reasons why we should do just that. There's a reason this one has made it onto many lists of favorite psalms. What I especially love about this psalm is that the concluding verse gives three reasons to delight in God: God is Good. God is endlessly merciful. God is eternally faithful.

I've led quite a few Bible studies in my time. It's common for people to start studying the Bible and have some sort of pre-conceived idea that "New Testament God" is nice and "Old Testament God" is mean. How many problems can I count with this belief? There is no such thing as two gods; there is just one God of the entire Bible.

The New Testament isn't full of nice stories while the Old Testament is filled with mean stories. In fact, everyone's favorite Jesus sayings are quotations of verses from the Old Testament. "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might*" is Deuteronomy 6:5. "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" is Leviticus 19:18. This pokes a hole in the old "never-read-Leviticus" talking point, usually made by people who have never read Leviticus.

In more than one Bible study group, as we make our way through various bits of the Old Testament, someone has a sudden realization: "Oh, I see a pattern! God keeps telling people how to live. They obey God for a while, and things go well. Then they disobey, and they experience consequences. But then God keeps giving them second chances, over and over."

That's exactly right. God keeps giving us humans "second chances" over and over. Thanks be to God. That's the everlasting mercy and enduring faithfulness in this psalm. God never gives up on us. God never gives up on anyone.

Does God get angry? Yes. Does God impose consequences? Yes. But God's love never wavers. Perhaps it's like a parent who occasionally gets angry with a child, even while loving them beyond measure. And that same parent might dole out consequences to help the child learn. To say that God's love must come without expectation or consequences goes against everything the scriptures teach and our life experience confirms. God is ever loving, always merciful, and eternally faithful.

God is always ready with a second chance, no matter what we do or don't do.