

CCC GOD'S PRESCRIPTION TO FEARING P7B

THE FUTURE Psalm 23:6

II. GRACE IS WORKING IN YOU

Not only goodness will follow you but "*...mercy will follow me all the days of my life.*"

Isaiah 60:10 "*I will have mercy on you through my grace.*"

What is grace? Grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

GRACE. It's all God's able to do for us because of Christ.

Grace is the fact that God gives you what you need, not

what you deserve. Aren't you glad God doesn't give you

what you deserve? The Bible says, God is gracious and

gives us what we need, not what we deserve. What is

mercy? Mercy is grace in action. Why do we need mercy?

Because we're imperfect. We stumble and fall, we blow it,

we make mistakes. In the future you're going to sin! So in

the future, you need not only God's goodness, but you need

His mercy. You need His forgiveness, His pardon, His healing. When you really understand God's grace and mercy, when you really understand that God isn't out there trying to get even with you, if you've given your life to Jesus Christ, Jesus has taken the penalty for everything you've ever done wrong or will do wrong; He took it on the cross. He paid for it, you don't. So when a bad thing happens you don't have to think God's getting even with you. God doesn't "get even" for things that have already been paid for on the cross. That's grace, mercy. When you understand God's grace and mercy then you have no need to fear the future. Ps. 103 "*I will... not forget the glorious things God does for me. He forgives all my sins. He heals me. He ransoms me from hell. He surrounds me with loving-kindness... He fills my life with good things ... He is merciful and tender toward those who don't deserve it; He*

is slow to get angry... He never bears a grudge ... He has not punished us as we deserve for our sins for His mercy is as great as the height of the heavens. ... He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence him."

When you understand mercy, that God is not only being good to you, but He's being merciful to you in handling your mistakes, your sins, your faults, then you don't have any reason to fear the future. Mercy means that when I'm going through a tough time, a valley, a difficulty -- even one that I've brought on myself -- God is there to help me out. "...we can come before God's throne where we can receive His mercy and grace to help us when we need it." In His mercy, He can help because of what Jesus has done. Mercy, like goodness, follows us in life. Picture a parent following a little child around picking up after them.

God is constantly picking up your messes, cleaning up your messes. Things that you blow, things that you make a mistake, things you get out of order and then you go carelessly on to the next thing. God is behind you, picking it all up, putting it back together, working it all out, taking care of the messes. That's mercy. He's picking up behind you, He's cleaning up your messes. *"Mercy will follow all the days of my life"* -- not some of the days, but *all* the days. God doesn't turn His goodness and His mercy on and off. He doesn't treat you nice one day and the next day treat you badly. All the days of my life, I'll have God's goodness and God's mercy. You're going to experience many different kinds of days in life. Happy Days, sad, sick, depressing, lonely, difficult -- that's why we fear the future -- we don't know what's going to happen. But if you have put your trust and faith in Jesus Christ... you will never

face a day without God's goodness and mercy with you. He will be with you all the time. Some days you won't feel it, some days you won't see God's mercy and grace and it may be hard to determine. But surely, for certain, without a doubt God's goodness and mercy are going to be there even in the tough times in the future. If He says, "*surely goodness and mercy will be with you all the days of your life*", they will! We get so worked up and worried about the future because we start the "what if"-ing – or the "just suppose..." There is no supposing in the Bible. It says *surely!* Christians go to the future not with a question mark but with an exclamation point, *surely*.

III. HEAVEN IS WAITING FOR ME

"... *and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*" That's one of the most important little connections we see in the Bible. It connects yesterday and today with tomorrow. God

says, "I've got this great life planned for you here on earth. I have a purpose for you here on earth and as you go about following it... *surely goodness and mercy will follow you through it*, BUT that's not the end! I've got something else at the end of this!" He builds it to a crescendo. David ends this 23rd Psalm by saying "We're going to heaven!" Jesus saves the best until last. When you trust your life to Jesus it just keeps getting better and better and I am here to tell you the best is yet to come. "*We know that our body will be destroyed. But when that happens, God will have a house for us. It will not be a house made by human hands; instead, it will be a home in heaven that will last forever.*"

2 Cor. 5:1 How long is forever going to last? *Forever!*

Someday your body is going to die, but you aren't. Your body is going to end... but that's not going to be the end of you. You're going to live forever in one of two places –

with God or separated from God... We call them, heaven or hell. They are both real places and you will spend eternity in heaven or hell, it your choice. Your body is going to die but you're not going to die. *Why?* Because, we were made to last forever. That's why Christians are the most confident people about the future? "*We look forward with confidence to our heavenly bodies. And we are not afraid, but are quite content to die, for then we will be at home with the Lord.*" 2 Cor. 5:6,8. Death, for Christians, is a transfer, it's actually a promotion. Listen, you're not ready to live until you're ready to die. (REPEAT) You don't know how to live until you're ready to die. Only a fool would go all through life, totally unprepared for something that everybody knows is inevitable. You're going to die. Someday. If you have accepted Christ, you're going to go to heaven. What is heaven going to be like? You're going

to be rewarded for your faithfulness to God and your obedience to Jesus Christ while you were here on earth. We're going to be reunited with loved ones who know the Lord, Jesus Christ. We're going to be reassigned work to do that we like to do in heaven -- Some people think when you get to heaven, you'll be given this white sheet and set around all day on a cloud, strumming a harp -- to me, that would be hell! I can't think of anything more boring than setting around on a cloud strumming a harp forever. You're also not going to be an angel in heaven. God's going to give you stuff to do and it's going to be stuff you like to do. We're going to be released from pain, from sorrow, from suffering, from depression, from fear. Rev. 21:4 "*He will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain. All of that has gone forever.*" Doesn't that make you a little homesick

for heaven? Who is heaven made for? It's not made for everybody. It's made for people who say, "God, I want to be a child of Yours. I want to follow You." I Peter 1:4-6

"God has reserved for his children the priceless gift of eternal life..." Everybody is created by God but not everybody is a child of God. You only become a child of God when you ask Him to put you in His family. You're born into His family. "...and you're given the priceless gift of eternal life; it is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And the Almighty God, in his mighty power, will make sure that you get there safely ..." See, it's not up to me to make sure I get there safely. Once I've committed my life to Christ, He makes sure I get there safely to receive it. Why? Because I'm trusting Him. " There is wonderful joy ahead, even though the going is rough for a while down here." Heaven

was made for Christians, believers, for those who love Jesus. If you didn't love Jesus, why would you want to go be with Him for eternity?

Earth is the warm up act. Here on earth isn't the big deal. You're going to spend 60, 70, 80 maybe 90 years here on earth. But you'll spend thousands, millions of years in eternity – and the choice is yours to make where you will spend it, heaven or hell. Earth, is the appetizer, the preschool to Heaven for the believer in Christ. .

This here, isn't the big show. This is the opening act you're in right now. The problem is that even most Christians act like that all there is to life is going on here and now. That's all that matters. No! This is just preparation for the big event where you're going to spend all of eternity. "You are only visitors here...your real home is in heaven..." And God's word, the bible says if that is the case, So act like it!

Don't act as if everything that matters is what is here and now. People get so involved in materialism. Why? You're not going to keep any of that. It's not going with you into eternity. It's only temporary. We use it 60, 70, 80 years. So what? We spend all of our lives acquiring, accumulating, getting. We spend our lives as if making money is the most important thing in life and you have to get a whole lot. One day you're going to die and you won't have it any more. You're missing the point. Don't invest your life for things. Getting things is not the goal of life. Getting prepared for heaven is. How do you do it? By building character. By Growing in Christ. That's what you're taking with you. You're not taking any of your money, your cars, stereos, homes.... Don't buy into the world's system. Don't live on a superficial level. Live in light of eternity. Realize you're not going to be here forever. You're going to be in eternity

forever. Don't waste your whole life trying to get a bunch of things for right now that you're not going to keep anyway. It's all on loan; you don't really own anything. You just get to use it while you're here on earth. And then you give it up. You don't really own anything. Live in light of eternity.

I want to finish up by saying this I want to make this point clear to you. Does everybody go to heaven? Absolutely not! Everybody does not go to Heaven. If God let Hitler and axe murderers and genocidal dictators into heaven He'd have to apologize to everybody else. If God let everybody into Heaven, it wouldn't be heaven. It'd be hell and I'm not sure I'd want to go there and He's not going to let everybody into heaven. He lets those into heaven who want to be with Him because they loved... Now do they start that the day they get to heaven, No, they loved Him

during their time here on earth and lived for Him here during their time here on earth..

How do I know I'm going to heaven? If you were to die tonight are you sure you would go to heaven? I don't have an ounce of doubt in my mind that I would. Not that I deserve it but because I've done what the Bible says to get ready. John 10 *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."*

How do I know I'm going to heaven? Two things: Jesus says, *"My sheep listen to me and they follow me."* Are you doing that? Are you listening to what God says to do with your life? Are you following Jesus Christ? Is He your Shepherd and your Savior? If you say, Yes, I'm listening to God and I'm trying to let Him lead my life, letting Jesus Christ be my Savior; I know I'd never get to heaven on my

own and I'm trusting Him. Then you can say with absolute confidence, surely I know I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. I *will* dwell. Not I *might* or I *wonder*. I *know* I'm going to heaven, because I've done what the Bible says. What if I sin after I commit my life to Christ? What do you mean *if*? You're going to sin after you become a Christian. When you give your life to Christ -- when you put your hand in His hand -- God holds onto it. He grasps it. There are times in life when you're going to want to let go of that hand. You're going to want a relationship that you know is wrong, read material that you know is bad, make an unethical decision, do things that God says not to do. You're going to want to let go of God's hand. But He's never going to let go of yours. He says you are in His hand and no man can snatch you away from Him. I will not perish -- not because of me. I don't have to keep myself

safe; God's goodness and God's mercy keep me safe. It's not up to me. I just do the trusting, He does the keeping. And He won't let go of me. When you face the future, what do you see? Do you look at it with eyes of doubt? With eyes of cynicism? With eyes of expecting the worse? You have two choices in life: You can either face the future as a cynic, a doubter, with negative thoughts, expecting the worse. Or you can face the future expecting God to be with you and His goodness and His mercy to follow you all the days of your life. It is amazing how much better life gets when you start to actively look for God's goodness and God's mercy in every experience. It'll change your life. We're concluding Psalm 23 today. In Psalm 23 we have seen how much God loves you. We've seen how much God cares for you, how He says "I want to be your shepherd." What's the bottom line of this series? What have

we learned? What can you take with you and wear it out today. If I summed it up in one sentence it's this: **Jesus is all you need.** You don't need anything else. As I looked at the psalm I summarized it like this: If I know the shepherd, I don't have to fear anything. I don't need to fear poverty because the Lord is my shepherd, I have everything I need. I don't need to fear loneliness, for He is with me. I don't need to fear mistakes, for He guides me on the right path. I don't need to fear failure, for He restores my soul. I don't need to fear the future, because goodness and mercy are going to follow me all the days of my life. I don't even need to fear death, because I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. God is beneath me in green pastures. He is beside me in still waters. He is with me in the valley. He is around me in the presence of my enemies.

He's upon me anointing my head with oil. He is before me leading me in the right paths. He is behind me, surely goodness and mercy will follow me. He's even beyond me in heaven. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

What more could you want? That covers it all. Jesus is all you need. The good shepherd provides protection, provision, peace, providence, companionship (His presence), and paradise. That wraps it all up.

Let us Pray: