Mercy and Grace

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By
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1
God Has Always Been a Merciful God

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

He will not always strive with us; neither will He keep his anger forever.

He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his lovingkindness toward those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.

For He Himself knows our frame;

He is mindful that we are but dust.

As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

When the wind has passed over it, it is no more; and its place acknowledges it no longer.

But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children;

To those who keep His covenant, and who remember His precepts to do them.

Psalm 103:8-18, NAS

God's mercy is often relegated to the New Testament under the ministry of Jesus. Many people see God in the Old Testament as a God of judgment, and they believe when Jesus came, God changed and became the God of mercy.

I have good news for you: GOD DOESN'T CHANGE! Malachi 3:6 says, **"For I am the Lord, I change not..."** He has always been a merciful God. The entire Bible speaks of mercy, not just the New Testament.

2
God Is Longsuffering Toward Us

In Genesis, when God created man and put him in the garden, scripture says everything He made was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). That was God's mercy. Man didn't merit or earn His mercy.

Then when Adam and Eve sinned, they were driven from the garden, but that was for their protection. If they had partaken of the fruit of the tree of life in the state they were in, they would have been eternally lost. God covered them and, in a sense, the covering was God's mercy.

Sometimes people think about the flood as judgment, but Noah preached for over 100 years while he was building the ark, and the Bible very clearly tells us the time frame was the mercy of God, giving the people a long period of time to repent. Noah was called "the preacher of righteousness." He preached an illustrated sermon every day!

All of the people could have helped Noah build the ark, and no doubt each person would have been allowed entrance into the ark before the flood if they had simply received the mercy of God.

In 2 Peter 3:9, the scoffers and mockers were asking, "Where is the promise of Christ's coming? You New Testament Christians have been saying that He is coming soon." Peter answered that mocking statement: **"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is *longsuffering* to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."**

God's will is that not one person would be lost; therefore, He is longsuffering. The time until Jesus' return is a time for people to receive the mercy of God.

When the Israelites were in bondage in the land of Egypt, God, in His mercy, raised up a deliverer in Moses. Then when Joshua brought the Israelites into the promised land, we see God's mercy again. The people who loved the Lord obeyed Him and were blessed, but when they began to worship idols, they came under oppression and bondage. Finally, they repented and God raised up new deliverers—Samson, Jephthah, Barak, Deborah and on and on, one after another.

Even though the Israelites were in rebellion, when they repented, God raised up a new deliverer. The mercy of God continually came on the Israelites. Years later, the Israelites asked for a king. The first king was Saul, then David and later Solomon. After Solomon, the kingdom split. The ten northern tribes became the nation of Israel, and the two southern tribes became Judah. We see the mercy of God upon these two groups of people.

Israel continually went into idolatry, but God sent the prophets to them. Remember the situation with Elijah and Ahab: the demonstration of the fire falling from heaven to show the people that the God of heaven was their God and that they weren't to worship Baal was God's mercy. Still, they turned backward and finally, the Assyrian army took the people captive and replaced what was known as Samaria with aliens and foreigners. The Samaritan religion came out of that mixture.

Judah was no different. God sent prophet after prophet to them. Eventually, they hardened their hearts and were carried into captivity by the Babylonians.

Many times we have the concept of the prophets only pronouncing judgment, but their message was, "There is mercy if you will turn to the Lord, but there will be divine judgment and destruction if you do not repent." They proclaimed the mercy of God to those who would repent.

O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Psalm 90:14

3
This Is an Age of Mercy

We are in an age of mercy right now. In fact, all of us have had mercy that we don't even know about. Ezekiel 18:20 says, **"The soul that sinneth, it shall die.... " God** said to Adam in Genesis

2:16,17, **"...Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."** Romans 6:23 says, **"For the wages of sin is death...."** Romans 3:10 says, **"...There is none righteous, no, not one."** Romans 3:23 says, **"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."**

On the basis of these verses, there isn't one of us who wouldn't have already been stamped out if God had judged us according to our sins. We would already have been roasted and toasted! But thank God, He has not rewarded us according to our sins nor dealt with us according to our iniquities. He has dealt with us on the basis of His mercy.

Every verse in Psalm 136 ends with, **"...For his mercy endureth for ever."** It is important that we understand God's mercy. Psalm 103:11 says, **"For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him."** To *fear Him* means "to reverentially worship, honor and obey God."

In one sense, every person on earth has benefitted from God's mercy. Wicked people still eat, they still have houses, and they still drink the water that is on the earth. That is God's mercy. He doesn't have any obligation to those who don't love Him, serve Him, or obey Him. God has a right on the basis of His commandments and the fact that He is a holy God to annihilate us the moment we sin. You may question, "Why hasn't He?" Because He is a merciful God!

Why does God extend His mercy? He is a good God. He is a merciful God. He lets it rain on the just and on the unjust. He sends His goodness upon all, yet only those who honor and reverence the Lord receive the *full benefit* of His mercy.

Salvation, deliverance, healing, love, joy, peace and righteousness come from God alone to those who meet His conditions for mercy. We can't earn the mercy of God. It is a gift.

Possibly you can explain the difference between love, lovingkindness,

longsuffering, mercy and grace, but they are, in a sense, synonymous. They express the same truth, so I will speak of them as one and the same.

Scripture says *grace and mercy* have come to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the mercy and grace of God revealed from heaven so that we can have mercy and grace here in the earth and for all eternity.

Grace and mercy have come in Jesus Christ.

4
Salvation Comes Through God's Mercy

We are not saved by our own works. We are not saved by how good we are. In preaching, one of the primary things I have had to keep in mind is to help the people understand that just because they have been a part of a church doesn't mean they are saved by being members of that church, by reading the Bible, or by trying to be good people.

There are people who have grown up in church, they basically believe there is a God, they aren't Christ rejecters, but neither are they totally sold out to Him. They assume they are Christians, but that's an assumption that isn't based on any valid fact from the Word of God. We cannot be saved by our own efforts.

Ephesians 2:8, 9 says:

For by grace are ye saved through faith;

and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Salvation comes through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. Not only is your salvation through the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ, but even the good works that you do in this life are because of the mercy and grace of God. Sometimes people have the mistaken idea, "You get *in* by grace and mercy, but then you go through the rest of your life by works."

No! It starts with mercy and it ends with mercy, because in and of yourself, you still can't be perfect before God. You can only trust in His mercy and grace.

When we recognize that even the works that we do are because of God's mercy and grace, then all the glory goes back to God. Everything in life rises up to His praise and glory, because if it weren't for the Lord's mercies, we would all be consumed.

5
Healing Comes Through God’s Mercy

Healing is the result of God's grace and mercy.

Remember blind Bartimaeus calling out to Jesus as He came through Jericho?

...Blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.

And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, *have mercy on me.*

And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, *have mercy on me.*

And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

And Jesus answered and said unto him,

What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.

And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

Mark 10:46-52

Healing is God's mercy. We can't earn it. Any time someone receives healing, it comes by God's mercy. We can cooperate and meet God's conditions, but the bottom line is, *it's the grace and mercy of God, because we don’t deserve it.* There is nothing we can do to merit it, because our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

Healing is God's mercy.

6
Conditions for Mercy

God's mercy is abundant, but it is conditional. The condition is godly sorrow that produces repentance unto salvation.

Sometimes people get the idea that mercy and grace mean there is never a penalty for wrongdoing. We deal with this especially with young people. Disciplinary action for something they have done wrong can be the mercy of God saving them from a criminal act later. What happens may be minor, but what is ahead might be disastrous and tragic unless God gets their attention and corrects their pathway.

My brothers and I had strong discipline from our father when we were growing up. My one brother is in the military, and he has expressed how many people he has worked with have great difficulty in accomplishing tasks, being responsible and accountable, because they never learned discipline when they were growing up. They are reaping years of problems because of a lack of discipline in their earlier years.

We have thanked God many times for the mercy that was in our lives and that God provided direction and discipline when we were young. For the moment, it never seems to be joyous, but afterwards, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Paul said:

Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

2 Corinthians 7:9

In other words, he said, "I wrote a stinging rebuke to you about dealing with sin in the church. If you received it properly and dealt with it as you should, it won't damage you, but it will benefit you and produce good results."

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

2 Corinthians 7:10

When you have the right kind of sorrow, it will save you and deliver you.

For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea,

what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

2 Corinthians 7:11

Paul was saying, "No longer are you careless about the way you live. You got rid of everything that was wrong. It produced in you an intense desire to serve and obey God. It produced a zeal, even a revenge, against things you have done wrong. You corrected them. In all things, you approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." Godly sorrow is the condition for receiving God's mercy and grace.

Mercy calls for repentance.

7
Mercy Brings Responsibility

The mercy of God brings a responsibility, and that responsibility is that we have a change of life —that we mature in Christ so we can be carriers of His grace and mercy to others and that we walk in newness of life.

Let's bring this into the New Testament, because the Old and New Testaments both carry the same message. God doesn't change. Jesus Christ came to reveal what God had been saying in the law and the prophets. Moses presented it in the law, the prophets spoke it and Jesus demonstrated it.

Mercy and truth met together in Christ. They kissed, as the scripture says in Psalm 85:10. God is perfectly holy. He is a God of justice and judgment, but He is also a God of love, mercy and grace.

Our judgment fell on Jesus Christ. Our sin was laid on Him. Our penalty was put on Him so that God could justify us.

Jesus could say to those who stood around the woman caught in adultery, who deserved to be stoned, **"...He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her"** (John 8:7).

One by one, the accusers walked away until only Jesus and the woman remained. Then Jesus said:

Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

John 8:10,11

The condition for mercy was coming to Jesus with heartfelt repentance, but the responsibility was, "Go, and sin no more." The mercy of God helps you walk away from the power of sin.

There is a false doctrine that says, "God is a merciful God, so you can do anything you want." I have even heard it said, "God isn't going to send anyone to hell, because He is a God of mercy. Jesus died for everyone, so everyone is going to be forgiven." This is not biblical.

We need to remember that not everyone got on the ark. All of them could

have, but they didn't. Mercy is offered to all, but not everyone receives it. It must be received. The conditions must be met and the responsibility assumed to walk in newness of life.

Jesus repeated the same words that Hosea preached: **"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice..."** (Hosea 6:6).

The Spirit of God spoke through Amos what Jesus later expressed.

I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies.

Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.

Away with the noise of your songs!

I will not listen to the music of your harps.

But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Jesus desired justice, mercy and righteousness in preference to man's works. It is His mercy that saves us and gives us the power to walk in newness of life.

8
Hindrances To Receiving Mercy

Here are five hindrances that will keep you from receiving God's mercy in your life.

1. Self-condemnation will keep you from receiving God's mercy.

Many people who commit suicide are deeply sorrowful for bad things they have done. However, when you condemn yourself for all the bad things you have done and the devil points them out to you, you begin to get in agreement with him. Remember, Satan is the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10).

Jonah 2:8 says, **"They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy."** In other words, God can be offering you mercy, but if you entertain wrong thoughts and imaginations or lying vanities, you will miss the mercy of God.

God has mercy for the person who has done wrong, but if they have such a guilty attitude, "I've done so bad...I am so terrible," usually they will go back into the gutter of life and into the depths of sin. It produces more sorrow and heaviness. Many people get to the point that they despair of life itself, so they take their lives in self-condemnation.

When you condemn yourself, you will not look to the cross of Christ.

Hebrews 4:14-16 says:

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens,

Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Lamentations 3:22,23 says:

It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

Every time you see the sun rise, you can say, "Thank God, the mercy of the Lord continues." It goes on and on until the sun quits rising! We are in a time of

mercy and grace. You can receive it today. Don't play with it. Don't say, "I'll get mercy later." Receive the mercy of God *now,* and assume the responsibility to walk in newness of life.

The mercy of God is greater than your sin. Light is always greater than darkness. Mercy is always greater than sin. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so God's mercy is higher than our needs and problems. God's mercy is boundless. It has no limit. We need to tap into the full measure of the depth of the mercy and grace of God.

2. Self-righteousness will keep you from receiving God's mercy.

Let's review the account of the Pharisee and the publican in the parable Jesus shared in Luke 18:10-14.

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The publican who acknowledged that he was a sinner was forgiven, but the self-righteous Pharisee wasn't forgiven. Self-righteousness builds a wall and blocks the mercy of God.

The Pharisee was into "works." In a sense, self-righteousness and works go together. I want to separate them, because some people have a self-righteous attitude, thinking they are okay. There are others who continually attempt to earn their salvation by works. Both attitudes will stop the mercy of God.

3. A "works syndrome" will block the mercy and grace of God.

The more I study the scriptures, the more I realize that everything has come to us by the mercy and grace of God. From start to finish, we're in a life of faith, and faith speaks of grace and mercy.

Even in giving, people sometimes think they are making things happen by their giving, and they are receiving a harvest because of their own efforts. The

harvest you receive from whatever you give is the mercy of God. If you get over into a "works syndrome" that you are pulling it off with your own money and efforts, then you are right back in the same place as those who are attempting to reach God by the works of the law. But if you realize, "All the money I have has come from

God," then you will acknowledge that whatever harvest or blessing comes back to you is because of the mercy and grace of God.

Take a stand against assuming that works will attain righteousness. You do the works because it's your responsibility. You feed, clothe, reach out, witness, touch, share and give because freely it has been given to you.

4. Failure to give mercy will block the mercy of God.

Jesus said, **"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy"** (Matthew 5:7). If you are merciful to others, you will receive mercy.

In Luke 6:36-38, Jesus said:

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

We often use verse 38 in regard to financial giving, which is appropriate, but Jesus is talking about *mercy.*

The way you give mercy is the way others will show mercy to you. If you want mercy in good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, then you need to give it in the same measure to others.

5. Unforgiveness, bitterness and resentment will block God's grace and mercy.

When people are unmerciful, unforgiving and they hold grudges and resentments, they stop the healing power of God from coming into their body. They stop financial blessings, and they stop wisdom from coming into their lives. In fact, *all* of God's blessings are blocked by unforgiveness, bitterness and resentment.

Sometimes people think, "I'm going to keep confessing prosperity, and I'll prosper," but on the other hand, they are unforgiving toward another person. Their confession is sacrifice, and God says, **"... I desired mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6).**

God was fed up with the sacrifices of the people in the Old Testament,

because they were bringing their lambs and goats, but they didn't have mercy on their fellow man. God was saying He wanted a family that would be in love with each other. When Jesus came, He made us *one family in heaven and earth* (Ephesians 3:15), and God intended for this family to be in love with each other. That's why Jesus said:

...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matthew 22:37-40

It's time to forgive and release both the offenses and the offenders and be set free of unforgiveness, bitterness and resentment in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

Proverbs 21:21

My Prayer for You

Father, thank You for Your mercy and grace in this hour.

I pray for the removal of self-condemnation. If you have failed, the devil has condemned you and you have accepted his lies, I pray right now that you would be delivered and that you would see that God's grace and mercy are greater than your sin.

I pray for the removal of the spirit of selfrighteousness and the works syndrome that we have sometimes used to gain God's approval. None of our works can make us right before the Lord.

I pray for the removal of any unforgiveness, bitterness, or resentment that blocks God's mercy and grace in your life. Be set free from anything that would block God's mercy and grace in any area of your life in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Thank You, Father, that we are approved in Your Son, Jesus Christ. We have been adopted into

Your family through Jesus' shed blood, and we have been redeemed by His once-and-for-all sacrifice at Calvary. Amen.

Your Personal Prayer of Commitment

Father, thank You for Your Son, Jesus Christ, and His completed work at the cross which fulfills all the claims of justice, takes my judgment, fulfills the truth and opens the way for mercy and grace to come to me. I receive Your grace and mercy, Father. I need it every day.

Lord Jesus, I believe in You, not just as One Who lived, but as One Who yet lives; not just as One Who showed grace and mercy, but as One Who is grace and mercy. I come to the cross, and I receive the grace and mercy I need to begin life anew today with You as my Lord and Savior, Jesus.

I forgive and release all offenses and all offenders, Lord. I will hold no bitterness, resentment, or grudges. By the authority of Your Word, I forgive and offer grace and mercy in the same measure I wish to receive it.

Empower me with the Holy Spirit, Lord, so I can live an overcoming life in You.



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