

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy. Matthew 5:7

Mercy (Gk.= eleos) 'The outward manifestation of pity; it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it.' - Vines Expository Dictionary

The merciful are actively compassionate because as God's sons; they are taking on the characteristics of the heavenly Father - Luke 6:35-36. 'The merciful feel sympathy with the misery of another, and especially sympathy manifested in action.' - Vines / Hebrews 13:13. Mercy gets into their skin just as Jesus became a human being with a physical body. Mercy enters our hearts and flows out of our bodies into action. Mercy is expressed from the greater to the lesser and fully forgives and loves. The first three Beatitudes dealt with our empty, proud, insensitive, apathetic, unyielding selfish life but our God fills us to overflowing with His merciful nature.

Our tendency is to forget our former state and be proud of our blessings - Deuteronomy 8:10-14; 9:4-6; Matthew 18:32-33. God expects us to extend mercy to those who are like we once were, lost and without hope.

The apostle Paul knew and experienced this and even wrote about it in the book of Romans. In the first 11 chapters he describes the fallen state of mankind and how God has shown mercy to his people through the salvation and righteousness provided through Jesus' sacrificial death on our behalf. As we come to Romans 12, it is like reaching the summit of a mountain and God is calling us to stop and look back at all the mercy He has shown to us when we were sinners in the valley of our lives. He now calls us to go back down from the mountain to reach others.

Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - which is your spiritual worship. - Romans 12:1

As we reflect on God's amazing grace it will stimulate us to merciful to others.

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. - Romans 12:16

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. - Romans 15:1

Passion for God Without Compassion for Man = Pharisee-ism

The Pharisees were very devout but they did not have compassion for people. Jesus clearly discerned their true spiritual condition.

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former.
- Matthew 23:23 NIV

In India, the most devout Hindu 'holy men' aspire to reach the place of only possessing a loincloth, a walking staff, and a begging bowl and to wander around the villages as a beggar.

They would not think of helping others as they are self absorbed in their own quest to reach the pinnacle of spirituality. Religion without mercy is cruel and hard.

False religion has little time to meet the needs of others. It is preoccupied with meeting its own need of getting right with God. True religion through a relationship with Jesus Christ is different. The Christian has been made right with God through the righteousness of Jesus in exchange for their sin. They are now at peace with God and thus can go out to freely serve a world in need.
- John Beckerink

**Christianity that does not begin with the individual does not begin.
Christianity that ends with the individual ends.** - E. Stanley Jones

He is not the greatest who has the greatest number of servants, but he is the greatest who serves the greatest number. - E. Stanley Jones

Compassion for Man without Compassion for God = Humanism

Many modern day do-gooders seem to be quite loving and compassionate. However, please do not bring up the subject of loving God to them or you may find out that they are not so loving after all! Mercy with righteousness and concern over sin is missing from them. Without righteousness from God, mercy ends in mushiness and moral laxness.

Mercy is God's outgoing love and kindness to each individual. The Pharisees saw a tax collector but Jesus saw a man - Matthew 9:9-13. Mercy is self-identification with others so we can see, think and feel as they do. The merciful forget self and enter into the world of others. Tax collectors were Jews who worked for the government of Rome. They did not just collect taxes but also took a commission for themselves in the process. Jesus showed mercy to sinners and the down-trodden, unlike the hard-hearted religious leaders.

Mercy was unknown to rough Romans and prideful Jews. The Romans glorified courage, power and discipline. A Roman citizen could kill and bury his unwanted slave. He could also kill his wife if he chose to. A Roman father had the right to choose the fate of a newborn child. He gave the sign thumbs up if it lived and thumbs down if it was to be drowned immediately. Pagan societies today and in the past have little respect for life. In ancient Greece an unwanted child was left on a lonely mountain to perish. Israel's barbaric neighbors killed their old parents and threw them to the beasts. Unwanted children were sacrificed to the gods or thrown away like rubbish.

Let there be a law that no deformed child shall be reared. - Aristotle

Mad dogs we knock on the head, we drown even children who at birth are weakly and abnormal. - Seneca

The Jews were also merciless to sinners and gentiles. Unfortunately, the modern world is filled with similar events, even in so called civilized countries where abortion and even euthanasia abound. A Romans 1 type of society is '**without mercy, ruthless and heartless**'. - Romans 1:31. A world without Christ soon turns cruel and barbaric. Christ says to the undeserving, 'Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing'. Paul experienced this mercy - 1 Tim. 1:13-16. Peter denied Jesus three times but later Jesus makes breakfast for him and heals these bad memories - John 21:12. Peter preaches the first sermon at Pentecost. This was the day that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to come upon the newly formed church at Jerusalem. (The giving of the Spirit was also a reminder and affirmation to the disciples that Jesus had arrived safely back in heaven and was still with them with power and authority by means of the Holy Spirit.)

Methuselah was the longest living man in history. He is a symbol of God's longsuffering and mercy. His name can mean; **'His death shall bring'** or **'When he is dead, it shall be sent'** The worldwide flood came the year after Methuselah died. God was very merciful - 969 years worth. Then came the global judgment against sinful, rebellious mankind. God's pattern is to show great grace before great judgment. Many in the last days who scoff at the delay of the second coming of Jesus, fail to understand it is because of his great mercy. - 2 Peter 3:3-9.

At the crucifixion of Jesus, two thieves heaped insults on Jesus - Matthew 27:44, Mark 15:32. Jesus did not retaliate but prayed to the Father to forgive them. This must have had an effect on one of the thieves, for his heart was softened and he asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom. Jesus did. We will see that former thief in heaven!

Throughout the Old Testament the word mercy occurs over 150 times and it can also be translated at times as kindness. God describes Himself with these words to Moses.

The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty. Exodus 34:6-7a NKJV

Psalm 136 was sung at the opening of the Passover Feast and was a favorite song in the Jewish temple. Each of its 26 verses begins with a praise about God and ends with the words, **'For His mercy endures forever.'**

When the ark of the covenant was brought into the temple, the priests and the people praised and thanked the LORD as one with instruments saying: **'For the LORD is good and His mercy endures forever'**. The glory of the LORD then filled the temple and the priests were overcome with the presence of the LORD. - 2 Chronicles 5:11-14

At the dedication of the temple, King Solomon prayed and then fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering. The glory of the LORD then filled the temple and the people bowed down and worshiped and praised the LORD saying:

'For He is good, for His mercy endures forever' - 2 Chronicles 7:1-3

David was Israel's great king, but he committed adultery and murder. David trusted more in God's mercy than that of man - 2 Samuel 24:11-12. In the books of 1&2 Kings and 1&2 Chronicles we are given the same history of Israel. However, Kings is from the earthly vantage point and includes David's transgressions. The book of Chronicles gives the spiritual viewpoint which does not even mention David's sins as part of the record. God does not record failure in heaven! **'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.'** - Hebrews 10:17. That same mercy follows believers - Psalm 23:6. It reaches high - Psalm 36:5, 57:10; fills the earth - Psalm 119:64, touches all people - Psalm 145:8-9; brings daily hope - Lamentations 3:19-23; and greatly pleases God - Micah 6:6-8.

In the Old Testament, Israel had 1400 years of wickedness and ingratitude towards God. This same attitude has continued for the world since then. God saw that we were dead in our sins (dead = under the sentence of death / separation from God) and were by nature objects of wrath, but because of his great love for us, **God who is rich in mercy**, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. - Ephesians 2:1-5.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you. - 1 Peter 1:3-4 NIV

*He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but **because of his mercy.***
- Titus 3:5a NIV

*Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. **Be merciful to those who doubt** - Jude 21-22a NIV*

Fruit Dispensers

Christians have the nature of Christ in them via the Holy Spirit. - Galatians 5:22; Luke 6:35-38; 10:37. Mercy is included in patience and kindness and is to be part of a believer's daily wardrobe - Colossians 3:12-13, Proverbs 12:10. Mercy is kind to animals and to the needy - Proverbs 12:10; 14:21-22, is good for one's soul and honors God- Proverbs 11:16; 14:31. Mercy honors God and acts like God - Proverbs 14:31, Luke 6:35-38; 10:37. Even though Jesus knew that Judas was about to betray him, he treated him as an honored guest for at the last supper Jesus first gave the first sop to Judas - John 13:12.26.

Some Christians are graced with more mercy as a spiritual gift. - Romans 12:8.

Peter is known as the apostle of hope and John the apostle of love as he seemed to be the closest to Jesus and wrote much about love eg. 1 John 4. Jesus appreciated John's acceptance and understanding before the crucifixion - John 13:23. John was the only disciple of the 12 that died a natural death and was shown favor from God. St. Augustine invited people who had no placeto eat to his big and beautiful dining room table. Engraved on its top were these words.

Whoever loves another's name to blast, this tables not for him, so let him fast.
- St. Augustine

Discerning the Lord's body in communion

Most messages on communion I have heard miss the point of that statement - 1 Cor. 11:27-30. Is 1 Corinthians 11 speaking of the physical body of Jesus? Perhaps, but I think the context of this letter to the Corinthians is mainly about how Christians behave to one another as members in the body of Christ. We are to love another, forgive one another, show mercy to one another etc. God has show us mercy through Christ Jesus, now we should extend that same mercy to others. Amen!

HOW UNHAPPY THE UNMERCIFUL

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- Matthew 5:6-7

The righteousness that Jesus referred to was the righteousness of God. Those who experience God's grace, mercy and are filled with his goodness, are the ones who have the desire and willingness to show mercy towards others.

The Pharisees sought after righteousness, but it ended up being their own, not God's. How can we tell? Because they did not have mercy to others. They were Jesus' primary antagonists. Throughout the gospel accounts they hounded Jesus and seemed to be an unhappy bunch. They were 'always looking for ways to accuse

Jesus'. They were very judgemental towards others but thought very highly of themselves in their self-righteousness. - Matthew 23:23

Jesus told a story about an unforgiving servant - Matthew 18:32-35.

Human nature tends to judge and blame others - James 2:13, Proverbs 21:13

Woe to the unmerciful who forget God's mercy - they will receive no mercy at God's judgement seat.

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