

“Mercy”
Exodus 5:1-4
(Preached at Trinity, October 15, 2006)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we entered into **Chapter 5** we found Moses and Aaron entering into the presence of Pharaoh. We are not told how these two Hebrew men who would have been seen as no more than slaves gained access into the presence of Pharaoh. All things are possible with God. Moses delivers the message from God:
Exodus 5:1 – “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.”
2. Pharaoh’s answer to God’s reveals the heart of lost humanity:
Exodus 5:2 – “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.”
3. It is this heart of man that has resulted in the wrath of God being kindled.
Romans 1:18 – “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;”
 1. It isn’t that human beings do not know God. It isn’t that Pharaoh did not know God.
 2. God had clearly revealed Himself.
Romans 1:19-20 – “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. ²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”
 3. Pharaoh asked, “Who is the Lord?” He already knew the answer. The problem was he suppressed what he knew. He purposely denied God. This is what all men do.
4. As I pointed out at the beginning there are several themes that run throughout Exodus.
 - A. One of these is the problem of sin.
This will be the heart of the issue in the next several chapters as God deals with Pharaoh. It will be the heart of the matter as God deals with His stiff-necked people in the wilderness. It will also be at the heart of God giving the Law in **Chapter 20**
 - B. Another theme that runs throughout Exodus is the theme of mercy.
We will see it clearly as God delivers His covenant people from their bondage in Egypt. It will be at the heart of the Passover. God’s mercy, however, is not limited to His elect people.
We can also see God’s mercy demonstrated with Pharaoh.

5. In **Romans 9** Pharaoh is used as an example of God's Sovereign mercy upon the elect.
Romans 9:15-18 – "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ¹⁶ So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. ¹⁷ For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. ¹⁸ Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth."
6. God shows mercy upon whom He will. Yet, there is also a great mercy God shows upon all human beings. We call this general mercy or common mercy.
7. God's dealings with Pharaoh serve a two-fold purpose.
 - A. God ultimately does all things for His own glory. He does all things for His own name's sake
Romans 9:17 – "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."
 All of God's dealings in the Exodus are to show Himself mighty in deliverance.
Exodus 20:2 – "I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."
 - B. Second, God's dealings with Pharaoh are a great demonstration of His mercy.
 1. God didn't have to deal with Pharaoh to deliver His people. He is infinitely powerful. He could have destroyed the entire nation of Egypt. He could have smitten them all with blindness.
 2. As God deals with Pharaoh we see His gracious mercy. Over and over Pharaoh will be given the opportunity to repent. Over and over he continues to deny God.
Exodus 5:2 – "Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go."
9. Tonight I want us to look at this mercy.
 - I. God's mercy is foremost for His honor and glory
Isaiah 48:9 – "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off."
 A. Mercy is one of God's Divine attributes
 1. Mercy shines forth God's holy character
 It manifests His compassion upon fallen men
Psalms 103:4 – "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;"
 2. The cover of the Ark of the Covenant was called the Mercy Seat – it was a place of forgiveness and mercy reflecting God's compassion upon His people
 3. Divine mercy does not deny the wrath of God – it only delays it
 God's sword is in its sheath but can quickly and easily be withdrawn
 - B. Mercy presupposes sin - God is a God of inflexible justice, unchanging justice
 1. He will judge His enemies. His fury is already kindled, yet He is manifesting His rich patience and mercy upon humanity.
Nahum 1:3 – "The LORD *is* slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*"

2. He makes laws. He determines the standards. They are inflexible. God cannot lower His standards
 3. He judges accordingly
If any creature rebels against divine government he immediately falls under the judgment and condemnation of God. The condemnation is now. God's wrath is kindled now. All men deserve God's judgment now. God's delay of judgment is according to His mercy
- C. God's mercy is the indescribable demonstration of God's pity – It manifests God's rich compassion upon those deserving of His wrath
1. He demonstrates His mercy in granting men time to repent
 - a. This is what we are witnessing in this passage with Pharaoh
 - b. God could have easily killed Pharaoh and sent him to hell and Israel could have calmly walked out of Egypt.
 - c. God will give Pharaoh numerous times to do the right thing
 2. God also demonstrates His mercy in pouring out His goodness upon sinful men – those who are His enemies.
 - a. Not only has God delayed judgment, He give good things to His enemies.
Matthew 5:45 – “. . he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”
Psalms 145:9 – "The LORD *is* good to all: and his tender mercies *are* over all his works.
 - b. God had raised Pharaoh up as a king. He lived in a palace and had everything he ever desired. All of it was by the mercy of God. Instead of bowing before God in gratitude he denied God
Exodus 5:2 – “Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.”
 3. All of this was according to God's good pleasure
 - a. If you have not received Christ you are on borrowed time
 - b. You are only alive by God's mercy
- II. God's mercy is Sovereign
- A. We always see a balance between God's sovereignty and human responsibility
 1. Pharaoh was accountable for his actions
 - a. He chose to treat Israel with cruelty
 - b. He chose to deny God's right to rule
“I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.”
 - c. This was by Pharaoh's own will
Exodus 8:32 – “And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.”
 2. We also find God's sovereignty clearly presented
Exodus 10:1 – “And the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him:”
 - B. God's mercy is always sovereign
 1. It endures as long as He determines
 2. When we read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart it simply means that God finally left him to the folly of his own sinful heart.

- C. We can also see this with the inhabitants of Canaan
1. God gave them over 400 years to repent
Genesis 15:13-16 – “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; ¹⁴ And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. ¹⁵ And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet full.”
 2. Each day of these four hundred years was by the mercy of God
 - a. They married, they had children, they bought property – they enjoyed life --- and they continued in their sin
 - b. Finally time ran out. The time for repentance ended.
 3. The text says that God hardened their heart but all He had to do was give them over to their own reprobate heart.
Joshua 11:18-20 – "Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. ¹⁹ There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all *other* they took in battle. ²⁰ For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, *and* that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses."

III. God's mercy is unmerited

- A. Why was God giving Pharaoh these opportunities to repent?
 1. It wasn't because Pharaoh showed promise – he was evil to the core
 2. We can see this in the way he cruelly afflicted Israel by taking away the straw
 3. God's mercy upon Pharaoh was simply out of His kindness
- B. We can see God's sovereignty as mercy is applied in different ways upon this earth
 1. If you are not a Christian the fact that you are not in hell tonight is not because you do not deserve it.
 2. Every human being deserves only a life of suffering and torment. Instead God showers us with varying degrees of tender mercies
 3. If every human being deserves to be in hell how grateful should we be for God's tender mercies? How much should we marvel at God's goodness for each good day we experience?
 4. Can you see the wickedness of men when they murmur and complain? This is why God's wrath was kindled against Israel.
Numbers 14:27 – “How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.”

Conclusion:

1. God is withholding His wrath that men might repent and turn to Him in righteousness
 - A. We saw Him demonstrate it in His great longsuffering in the days of Noah

Genesis 6:5 – “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

 1. He withheld the flood for 120 years

Genesis 6:3 – “And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.”
 2. For 120 years men were warned that they might repent

2 Peter 2:5 – “And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;”
 - B. This is what we are witnessing here with Pharaoh
 1. God is commanding him to repent and then giving him time to comply
 2. This went on for many days, yet Pharaoh hardened his heart
2. God's mercy will not endure forever
 - A. Pharaoh kept refusing to submit to God and finally judgment came
 - B. The lost currently use and abuse God's mercy
 1. They breathe His air, eat from His rich bounty,
They deserve to be in hell
 2. Demonstrated by the numerous calls to the church for assistance
They have never given to a church and yet seek the church's aid
 3. The lost have no desire to honor God yet want to take advantage of His blessings
 - C. This is only a temporary situation – God's mercies to the wicked are all temporal
 1. There will be no mercy on the day of judgment
 2. God's call for repentance is for today

Hebrews 3:7-8 – “Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:”
3. Ultimately God's mercy is only found in Christ
 - A. This was demonstrated over and over in the Old Testament
 1. Seen at the fall
 - a. God could have justly destroyed creation
 - b. He made them a covering

Genesis 3:21 – “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.”
 2. Seen at the flood

Genesis 7:1 – “And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.”
 3. We will see it at the Exodus

Exodus 12:13 – “And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are*: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt.”

4. It can be seen with the brazen serpent in the wilderness
Numbers 21:8 – "And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."
John 3:14-15 – "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."
- B. It is fully revealed in the New Testament
Titus 3:4-7 – "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, ⁵ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; ⁶ Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; ⁷ That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."
4. Do you understand God's mercy? It must not be abused. It must not be ignored.
Do you know God's ultimate mercy in Christ?