

GOD'S MERCY
Message 2
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Scripture:

INTRO: Our study is of the word "mercy." Read through the Bible and mark the word *mercy* and you will find it used several hundred times. The word *merciful* or *mercy* occurs 304 times in the KJV. *Grace* or *favor* occur 233 times, and *love* 323 times. That may not be quite the same in the original language but still you see some of the importance of these words.

The usual thought that is given in the definition of *mercy* is that *mercy* is when you don't get what you deserve to get. It is sometimes said like this: *Grace* is when you get what you don't deserve and *mercy* is when you don't get what you deserve. I have defined the Biblical concept of *mercy* like this: *Mercy is an action caused by feelings of compassion in one who sees another in a need that person cannot take care of, and the one who sees it can and does provide for that need. The act of mercy satisfies the feelings of compassion in the provider and alleviates the need in the one provided for.*

If we had a puzzle, and it had a picture of *mercy* with its related words you would have an event that triggered feelings of compassion through the bowels of the soul. Then you would have this person who has these feelings sitting down and pondering how he or she might rightly take care of those feelings and thus the need. Then, having figured out what to do based on truth, he or she sets about doing that. When it is done, the feelings of compassion are satisfied and the need of the one in trouble is filled.

So, in the story of the good Samaritan, the Samaritan was on the way to Jericho. It is down a long way in mountainous terrain and some robbers have robbed a man and left him half dead on the road. A priest and a Levite, both religious people, saw him but passed by on the other side and continued on. But the Samaritan's compassion was set off by the detector, the bowels in the soul, and he took care of him. The end result is the Samaritan's conscience now allows him to move on freely. The wounded man is looked after and all is well.

1 What is the event? 1 A certain man going from Jerusalem to Jericho falls among thieves. They robbed him and beat him, leaving him half dead. 2 A priest and Levite both went by but their bowels did not override what they thought was important, but a Samaritan came along and the bowels of the soul moved him. 3 This resulted in the emotion of compassion. 4 Compassion now causes love to seek to find a just way to alleviate the feelings of compassion by doing what is right. 5 When love finds a way to do what the feelings of compassion want to do, it has to decide to do so freely, and that, in my understanding, is grace. When the decision is made to do so freely, then whatever needs to be done is done, and that is mercy and that is our next step now.

6. Mercy

So just what is mercy? Here is how I defined it: *Mercy is an action caused by feelings of compassion in one who sees another in a need that person cannot take care of, and the one who sees it can and does provide for that need. The act of mercy satisfies the feelings of compassion in the provider and alleviates the need in the one provided for.*

The NT word for mercy is *eleos*. Sometimes the words for *bowels* and *compassion* are translated as *mercy* and that is confusing to the English reader.

So let us look at some examples of mercy. Turn to Luke 10 again. We'll begin in verse 30:

30 *Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*

31 *"Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*

32 *"Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.*

33 *"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had*

compassion. (Bowels in verb form, he compassionated him.)

Here is what compassion caused him to do, verse 34:

34 *"So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

In this case he did not need to decide what the right thing to do was, it was obvious. Now note that helping the man in need came by grace. How so? The person in need was given help freely. When something is done by grace, it is the giver who pays the price.

35 *"On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'*

Again, notice that the one who was helped is not required to pay by the one who helped him. The one who helped paid, and again the needy person was helped free of charge. He could not pay because he had been robbed. That is grace.

Verse 36:

36 *"So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"*

37 *And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."*

Now note that the Samaritan had compassion. That means he helped the man in need with what he needed, and that is mercy. That word is the regular word for mercy, *eleos*. Now we ask, the one who showed mercy, what did he do? What was this mercy? Mercy was the sum total of looking after this wounded man's needs. Mercy here does not mean not receiving what you deserve. Look at verses 33-35:

33 *"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.*

34 *"So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

35 *"On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'*

In this case we could not say that mercy means not getting what you deserve to get. Because of another's mercy, this wounded man got something he had not earned.

So let me give the definition I proposed earlier:

Mercy is an action caused by feelings of compassion in one who sees another in a need that person cannot take care of, and the one who sees it can and does provide for that need. The act of mercy satisfies the feelings of compassion in the provider and alleviates the need in the one provided for.

Now I want you to see the connection of all of this to love by looking at the context. We go back to verse

25 *And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*

26 *He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"*

27 *So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'"*

28 *And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."*

29 But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus then gives the story of the good Samaritan and Jesus used the story of the good Samaritan to show who one's neighbor is, and the point is that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. The Samaritan who helped the wounded man probably did not know him. But having come in contact with him he had become neighbor to him. Our neighbor is our fellow man we might meet in such a circumstance. And I have proposed that it was love that said, "The right thing to do for this man in this case is to look after his need."

So here you have an event. The bowels set off an alarm to the emotion of compassion. Compassion looks to love to see what is the right thing to do. The right thing to do is to do it freely and that is grace, and mercy, taking care of the need was the result.

We go now to Matthew 20. Jesus has come from Galilee on the far side of the Jordan River. This is the last trip Jesus makes to Jerusalem before His death and He is just passing through Jericho to go to Jerusalem. From Jericho to Jerusalem is a climb of some 2500 hundred feet upward. He is just leaving Jericho and we begin in verse 29:

29 And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.

30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

When they said, "Have mercy on us," what was the mercy they wanted? Well, they wanted their sight restored. Mercy is what you get when you get something you desire but you cannot get it for

yourself. You see, the difference between grace and mercy is this: Grace is how you get what you desire; mercy is what you get. It is the result of grace.

We go on in verse 32:

32 So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

33 They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened."

34 So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.

The word translated *compassion* here comes from the word for "bowels" which sets off compassion. And again, we might say, "So Jesus compassionated them." To *compassionate* someone is to supply the need of one in need, and that is mercy.

So here we have an event, the bowels send the signal, compassion desires to do whatever can be rightly done, which is what love determines, and the result a decision to do it freely, which is grace and that in turn supplied the need which is mercy. Mercy in this case was restored eye-sight.

7. Peace

When I originally studied this, I called the seventh step, "The Need Alleviated." When I studied the greetings in four epistles they said, "grace, mercy, and peace to you." From that I learned the result of the need alleviated is peace and this is the seventh and last step. Peace is what we all want when we are in need of something we cannot supply. So, peace is the seventh in the chain of events!

So, step 1 is the event. Step 2 is that the bowels are triggered. Step 3, the emotions of compassion are set off, causing the one seeing the event to desire to fulfill the need. Step 4, the one who can supply the need determines what the right thing to do is. Compassion drives us to do that which should

possibly not be done. Example of a parent not disciplining a child because of compassion. Step 5, is grace, the decision to supply the need freely. Grace is the means by which mercy comes. Step 6 then is that mercy is extended and the need is met. Step 7 the emotions of compassion are satisfied in the provider and the one in need has been helped out of his difficulty. The result is peace for both the giver and the receiver.

Let us go now to a story Jesus told in Luke 10. We'll read verses 30-37:

30 Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 "Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 "Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

33 "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.

The bowels of the priest and Levite did not stir them to action. But a certain Samaritan, from whom one might not expect this saw the same scene. His bowels moved him to compassion. Knowing it was the right thing to do we read on to see what happened:

34 "So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 "On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'

The Samaritan freely helped this man which is grace. The help, looking after the need, is mercy. The Samaritan is now able to go on in peace having satisfied his feelings of compassion, and the wounded man can now rest in peace because he has been cared for.

Now listen to verses 36-37:

36 *"So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"*

37 *And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."*

Our translation says the Samaritan showed mercy to the wounded man. The original has a verb for mercy and literally says the Samaritan *merci*ed him! How did he mercy him? He met this man's needs! That is mercy.

Having *merci*ed this man, now both the *merci*ed man and the merciful man have peace!

C. The series of events in divine mercy

That brings us now to consider God's mercy on man. I have given seven steps in man's mercy to man. I now want to give these seven in God's mercy toward man.

1. The Event

First is the event. There was an event that caused God's bowels to trigger an emotional response. This event happened in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned and man was doomed to eternal death and hell fire. The bowels in the spiritual realm, in my understanding, are part of the soul. So, we ask, does God have a soul? Listen to Isaiah 1:14:

14 *Your New Moons and your appointed feasts **My soul** hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.*

Yes, God does have a soul!

2. The Lord's bowels

When God saw man's plight, it triggered what we have here called the bowels of the soul. Now you might ask, does God have such bowels of the soul as well? We are not talking about physical bowels, for God is not physical. But He has a soul, and He does have bowels in the soul that cause compassion.

Listen to what the Lord says in Isaiah 42:1 where God speaks of Christ:

1 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

Turn to James 5:11. I haven't found a direct reference that man's sin caused compassion in the Lord for man's plight, but we learn from Scripture that God has a great capacity for compassion. James 5:11 says:

11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

The word translated *very compassionate* speaks of the bowels and here means many bowels from which the translation says He is very compassionate. The word for bowels is *splanknos*, and here it is *polus splanknos*. This expresses the idea that God has a very great capacity for feelings of compassion to be triggered. In the OT the clause, "His mercy endures forever" occurs many times.

3. Compassion

So that brings us the third step, compassion. James 5:11 further says that He is merciful. It is not the regular word for mercy. It is the word *oiktirmos* and means compassion. He is much boweled and therefore He has great compassion.

The event that caused God bowels to trigger His compassion was when Eve was deceived by Satan in the Garden of Eden, and she led the man into sin. God's compassion and mercy is shown right there in the Garden of Eden when God sought out Adam and Eve

and clothed them with skins. Here is the first shedding of blood in the Bible. The doctrine of Christ's blood is a very important doctrine in the Bible and it begins here.

4. Love

That brings us to number 4. Number 1 is the event. Number 2 is the triggering of the bowels. Number 3 is the feeling of compassion. Compassion now will seek to alleviate the need that aroused the compassion. Compassion now needs to go to agape love to see if there is some way to justly take care of this need. This is where John 3:16 comes in. It is also here that humans go wrong so often because compassion will want to cause one to overlook justice, but agape love requires that what is done must be right.

God's compassion for man who had been deceived by His archenemy caused His love to seek every possible means to save man. The Bible says God is love. John 3:16 says, as I translate, "For in this way God loved the world.." The *world* is a reference to lost mankind and if God is to save man He must do so must. His justice with regard to sin called for the death penalty of every sinner. If man died in sin he would be lost forever. So God, out of His great compassion found a way; He would send His only Son to die on man's behalf.

Listen now to Webster's 1828 definition of mercy. He says it is:

"That benevolence, mildness or tenderness of heart which disposes a person to overlook injuries, or to treat an offender better than he deserves; the disposition that tempers justice, and induces an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries and to forbear punishment, or inflict less than law or justice will warrant."

I ask, does God's benevolence, mildness or tenderness of heart dispose Him to overlook man's sinfulness? No, He can't! Does God's kind disposition induce Him to forgive trespasses and

injuries and forbear punishment, or inflict less than the law or justice warrants? No! A thousand times no! That would make Him unjust! But love found a way to save man and remain just at the same time! God paid the price of our sins when He sent His only Son to die in our place. Never did the devil understand that He would set up God's justice when he had Jesus Christ killed! God took His wrath out on His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Justice, the full punishment of the law must be met, and it was met in His Son! Love had found a way!

So how will God save man and satisfy His feelings of compassion? He chose that the second Person of the triune God would become man and then He would pour out His unmixed wrath on Him! He did not let Christ off lightly or treat Him better than man's sin deserved. He did not forbear punishment. He did not do less than the law required. When Christ took man's sin in the Garden of Gethsemane, he then bore man's just punishment to the full. God allowed man to do with His Son as he desired and when man was done the flesh on His Son's back hung in ribbons. And then the Son of God carried man's cross to the place of death. And there He was nailed to the cross and He bore the full wrath of God. God had turned His back on His only Son. And there He made satisfaction for man's sin. This, this, is God's love! This is how He loved man! And I remind you that He did not die for a select few, He died for all mankind! Love made sure that compassion did right!

How many a parent has ruined a child because their compassion was not filtered through truth or justice by love? But God could not now save man with no requirement from man. This is the claim of the universalist. If God did that, that would have left Him unjust as well.

5. Grace

That question brings us to the subject of grace. In order for man to be saved he must find favor with

God. And here is the question: Can a lost sinner find favor with God so that God will save him? The answer is a resound yes. And to answer man's major error, it is not by works. It is by faith! This is the teaching of the Bible from cover to cover!

In a message on grace I did some time ago, we saw example after example of how one person finds favor with another. Man finds favor with God by humility, by repentance and faith! So Ephesians 2:8-9 says this:

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

When man trusts the Lord by faith, he finds favor with God, and God saves him freely, which is by grace. Salvation is the gift spoken of in this verse.

And here we see in the order of events where grace fits in the scheme of salvation. I can say this, that when a person has been sinned against, it is only true repentance that can truly restore such a relationship.

One cannot make too much of living by faith. Hebrews 11 gives a long list of those who found favor with God by faith. It says that without faith it is impossible to please God, so without faith one cannot find favor with God. Habakkuk 2:4 gives these most crucial words: The just shall live by his faith! In three NT books this verse is quote. Romans, which talks about the just says this in 1:17:

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Galatians, which talks about living by faith says in 3:11:

11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

And 2:20 says this:

20 *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Hebrews, which speaks of faith says this in 10:38:

38 *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."*

From cover to cover, the thing that pleases God is faith. So, Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God. That means that only by faith can we please God and everyone can do that. Saving faith is never a gift in the Bible. Never!

Listen to Matthew 15:22-28:

22 *And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."*

23 *But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us."*

24 *But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

25 *Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"*

26 *But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."*

27 *And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."*

28 *Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.*

That brings us to the fact that man must qualify for salvation. To experience God's grace in salvation, man must be converted. I say converted, because conversion has within it two doctrines and these are both repentance and faith. It is this that qualifies man for salvation. When a person humbles himself before God and repents and places his faith in Jesus Christ, that person finds favor with God. That person pleases God! When the sinner repents and believes in Jesus Christ and asks for forgiveness of sins and for salvation, that sinner will receive that which he desires.

Now understanding justice when it comes to compassion led our Bible class to a very difficult point. Here it is: Man is to be compassionate to his fellow man and the person should be helped without the need for them to qualify. For example, the good Samaritan did not need to wait for the injured man to wake up and qualify before he helped him. He was in a helpless state.

Why then can God not have mercy on anyone in salvation before that person qualifies? And the class said, "Well, in forgiveness you say man cannot do what God cannot do. God cannot forgive before repentance takes place and man can't either. But then in compassion you say God cannot have compassion until man repents and believes, but man is to show compassion without such a requirement."

Let me point out the difference in cases. In the case of having mercy or compassion on someone because they fell among thieves one is not forgiving or overlooking sin. It is not a matter of sin.

On the other hand, if someone sins against us and we forgive unconditionally, justice has not been served. If that person repents, now the requirement for sin has been met and it is doing right to forgive. The unconditional forgiveness of man to man is no more right, than if God should unconditionally forgive.

When it comes to salvation the first thing that has to be dealt with is sin. That is why God cannot have mercy until repentance and faith have taken place.

You see, when man sins against man, now you cannot have mercy and just forgive without repentance. When one person sins against another, they cannot be freely forgiven without meeting a condition as well. Let me read it for you from Luke 17:1-4:

1 Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!

2 "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

3 "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

4 "And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."
When sin is involved, then there are conditions to mercy. But when robbers leave a man half dead on the road, this is an entirely different situation.

When man repents and puts his trust in Jesus Christ, he finds favor with God and he is forgiven. This forgiveness comes by grace, that means it is free.

6. Mercy

That brings us to mercy. When man finds favor with God, that is he repents and puts his trust in what Christ did for him, he is freely saved, and what he receives is salvation and that is mercy. So let me read the definition of mercy once more:

Mercy is an action caused by feelings of compassion in one who sees another in a need that person cannot take care of, and the one who sees it can and does provide for that need. The act of mercy

satisfies the feelings of compassion in the provider and alleviates the need in the one provided for.

So, in the salvation of man there was first an event; man had sinned. God's bowels were moved with compassion and His love found a way to save man. The price for God was horrendous. The benefit for man is unspeakable. But to be saved man has to meet the conditions and these are to repent of his sins and place his faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. When man exercises faith, God is pleased and because of this favorable disposition He now grants him salvation. Salvation is the mercy the sinner experiences when he repents and believes.

So listen to these passages:

Matthew 9:27 When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!"

I have said the difference between grace and mercy is that grace is how you get what you need, and mercy is what you get. These blind men wanted mercy and mercy for them meant sight.

[[Matthew 15:22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."

What was mercy for this woman? To have the demons removed from her daughter. You see, it was something she could not do. And why did the Lord give ear to her request? Well, if you study further, it was because of her faith. She was a Gentile woman and had more faith than most of the Jews!

Matthew 17:15 "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.

What would mercy be to this father? To have his son healed of leprosy! Again, I see grace as how we get

what we need when we are not able to provide it. We receive it freely. Then, mercy is what we get. When we repent and believe in Jesus Christ, we receive salvation. When we sin and we repent and confess our sin we receive forgiveness. Faith is what pleases God and always has and it is that which always finds favor with God.

Now a number of Bible scholars have pointed out that grace comes before mercy and I have found that to be so as well. Bishop Moule says that in the divine mind, and in the order of our salvation as conceived in it, grace comes before mercy. God, in righteousness must first clear the guilty before He can grant salvation (171).

7. Peace

The last step in this whole process is peace. The feelings of compassion have been fulfilled in the one who can provide what is needed by the needy one. It is the need of the needy one met, and the result is peace. Then the needy one's needs have been fulfilled and he too has peace with regard to that need.

And so, we ask, just what is peace? I define peace as the absence of friction. Others say it is more than that, it is the presence of righteousness among other things. I do not know how they get there, but they may be right, but the absence of friction is certainly part of it.

Man has a need for peace in three areas; with God, with man, and with oneself. The greatest need is peace with God, and all can have that, and it comes through salvation.

CONCL: Well, our study has been on mercy. What is mercy? In my understanding here is a definition:

Mercy is an action caused by feelings of compassion in one who sees another in a need that person cannot take care of, and the one who sees it can and does provide for that need. The act of mercy satisfies the feelings of compassion in the provider and alleviates the need in the one provided for.

The good Samaritan saw the need of the man who had been beaten and wounded. He was able to take care of that need and did so. He was merciful to the man who had been left half dead.

When God saw man in his lost condition His compassion was aroused. He was able to provide for that need by sacrificing His only Son, and He did so. When sinful man hears the good news of the Gospel and he repents and puts his faith in Jesus Christ, God, by grace freely saves him. That salvation is mercy and it brings peace between God and the one who repents and puts his trust in Jesus Christ. Grace us how we get saved and salvation is mercy.