

THE MERCY OF OUR GOD

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In 2006, I lost my job at West Carrollton High School due to budget cuts. At the time, my wife was working weekends and going to school. Our daughters were 1,3 and 4 years of age. Because of my educational degree in business and the timing of this event, the future looked bleak for finding another teaching position before the fall. During that summer, I needed some dental work done and went to my normal dentist, who happens to be one of my good friends since childhood. I received my bill, it was more than I could afford to pay at the moment. I called his office, explained my plight to his secretary, and set up a payment plan. When I received the bill the following week, my balance was zero! This was not because insurance covered the entire bill, but because my friend got word of my situation and took care of the balance himself. This was an act of mercy.

There was a debt I couldn't pay, and my dentist was in a position to take care of my debt by one of two ways: by either my paying it himself, or by having the authority over my bill to erase it. Therefore, he had the power to execute this act of taking care of my debt. Additionally, my dentist had the desire to cancel my debt. I was the recipient of mercy based on my position. My dentist was the giver of mercy based on his position, power, and desire to grant it.

In order for mercy to be mercy, all four components must be in place for both the giver and the receiver. The giver be in a position of authority to grant mercy, have the power to carry it out, a desire to grant it, and there must be debt to be covered. As the receiver, a debt must exist, you may or may not have the authority, power, and desire to receive it, but in the end, the only need of the receiver is to have an existing debt that is erased. The greater the debt, the greater the mercy.

For the last three weeks, we have been discussing the Attributes of God. First, we looked at God's Sovereignty, His supreme power and authority. Second, we heard Pastor Tim preach about our God from Psalm 139 where we saw that God is all knowing, He is all seeing, He is ever present, and He is our Creator and the Author of our lives. And last week, we were brought into the throne room with Isaiah and saw the holiness of God. Today, we will take a brief look at the Mercy of God, a mercy that allows us to approach this very throne of grace with confidence in our time of need. Let's pray.

HIS MERCY, OUR PAST PROVISION – SALVATION

Turn with me please to Ephesians 2:1-3

¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out

*the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*¹

What is the situation of mankind before this sovereign, all knowing, holy God?

First, notice we were born dead. In fact, our sentence, our judgment, was already carried out on our soul years before our birth. It all started at that faithful moment in the garden. Before the moment of our first breath, we were dead. And this is how we walked every single day of our lives. We were following the path of destruction. We lived this out every single day of our lives, pursuing after the things of this world just like everyone else. We were following the path of destruction. When your child does something foolish and you ask them why, and they respond, because they told me to what is our response? If they told to jump off a cliff, would you do it? This was us. And yes, we would have. And who were we following? We were following the prince of the power of the air, the fallen angel of heaven. We were one of his children. Listening and obey his “authority”. He was our god and we were in submission to him. But wait, it gets worse. Not only were we dead, and demonic, we were disobedient. Meaning, we chose to follow the prince of this world. We didn’t want to choose God. It wasn’t as if we were chained to another, waiting for release, and we had no choice. No, we were walking, living out our lives in complete opposition to the one true God, our Creator.

This is the spirit of the heart in all flesh chasing after false and deceptive desires, by choice, chasing after whatever our flesh desired or at least attempting to. We took part in the great exchange. And while we were busy doing this every day of our lives, we were storing up wrath for ourselves on the day of wrath, because, whether we knew it or not, the wrath of God was upon us at all times. “Woe, were we!” What a sorrowful and desperate situation. Every single day, the evidence of our guilt was piling up against us, page after page, decision after decision, and thought after thought. But thankfully there is more to read.

Let’s continue on to Ephesians 2:4-7

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

But God...two incredibly powerful words. But God. Our situation was hopeless. But God...intervened. He resurrected our lifeless spirit and moved us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. How could He do such a thing? Because He is rich in mercy. You see, God didn’t develop mercy because of the Fall. This is who He is. He is mercy and an infinite eternal God is infinitely and eternally merciful. It has often been said the God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament. The God of the Old is one of law, judgment, and anger while the God of the New is of love, mercy, and grace. Yet, the word mercy appears over 4 times more in the Old Testament than in the New. He is the same God yesterday, today, and forever. He is the definition of mercy.

¹ All Scripture references taken from, [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Why would God do such a thing? Let me put this in terms that may illustrate our plight and the actions of our Lord. We have committed to most heinous crimes, think about what that might be to you. It may be similar to what happened last night, the targeting and murdering of those 11 Jews as they were worshipping in their synagogue. That would be us. Now, say we have been convicted of this crime and sentenced to death. We don't even care. In fact, our response would be, I would commit the crime again if given the chance. This was us. But God, comes in, and grants a full pardon, forgiving the crime and penalty, allowing us to walk away scot free. But, even that illustration falls short compared to what God has done. You see, we may have walked away with a forgiven and forgotten penalty, but as merciful as God is, He is also a just God and therefore someone had to pay our penalty, that is the reason for Christ. It wasn't only out of pity or compassion alone, or He felt bad for us. No, it was His desire, motivated by a love so deep and rich, that he took His holy, perfect, and blameless Son, and crucified Him as penalty for our sin. Do you ever question God's love for you? DON'T! His love is inexpressible. All this was done, because our God, is rich in mercy.

But He is not done yet. Not only did our penalty get paid by from another, saving us from the wrath we rightly deserved, but He lifted us up and seated us together with Christ in the heavenly places. When someone is released from prison, if they have no one caring for them, then they are left with a few small items, maybe a bus pass, they are given nothing that is not theirs. That's not us upon our release! Not only did he pay our debt and then open the gate of the prison, but he made us alive, picked us up, seated this convicted criminal with Him in the heavenly realms. It was a position you and I could never attain. There was not one single thing we did to contribute to our salvation. We cannot even begin to comprehend this grace that we have received, but in the coming ages, we will be able to see the limitless riches of His grace in kindness toward us in our Savior, our Redeemer, Christ Jesus.

But why mercy and not just grace? Because you cannot have one without the other. They go hand in hand. In fact, grace, mercy, and judgement all work together. Mercy is the tie that binds grace and judgment. You see, grace is getting something good you don't deserve while judgment is getting exactly what you do deserve. They are opposites. Yet, it is by grace we receive mercy so that we don't pay the price of our judgment. Without judgment, there is no mercy and only by grace, we receive mercy.

Every single day we are mounting more and more evidence against our guilt and as each sin is committed. But for the believer, God the Father, see each individual sin, and looks at the crucified Christ as payment. That sin, paid, this one, paid every single day. It is not as though Christ continually suffers for our sins but rather, God in His infinite majesty and omnipotence, designed salvation that in the moment of Christ's crucifixion, He looked back in time, took those sins, along with the sins at the present moment, and at the same time, brought all future sins back to the moment of His crucifixion so that Christ suffered and paid for them then and there. The debt was, is, and will always be paid. And we, knowing what we know, still at times choose sin over the Savior, yet for the repent, God grants mercy and forgives.

HIS MERCY, OUR PRESENT MOTIVATION - TRANSFORMATION

Turn with me now to Romans 12:1-2.

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to

this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

In the first eight chapters of Romans Paul exposit the entire gospel. He spends the next three chapters explaining election in relation to Jew and Gentile. Then in chapter 12 Paul begins explaining what we are now to do based on what Christ has done for us.

He begins with an appeal. Paul is pleading with believers to offer themselves as a living sacrifice because of the mercies of God. What mercies is Paul talking about? He is talking about the previous 11 chapters of Romans. Because of all that God has done for you, which we basically summarized just a moment ago from Ephesians, live for Him. Why is he pleading? He's pleading by the mercies of God. Paul understood the mercy of God. Eleven chapters of mercy, and he knew what was impossible to do prior to Christ, was not only possible by the mercies of God. This act of giving ourselves, as living sacrifices is our act of spiritual worship. When you truly see God for who He is, like Isaiah did, high and lifted up, and you truly see who you are without Him, which is “undone, unclean, unholy, unrighteous...” and what He has done for you in Christ, you see and understand His mercy, and you worship. And the more you see it, and the more you believe it, the more you will be able to obey what it is that He asks you to do.

It is by the mercies of God we are exhorted to present ourselves to God. God's mercy will never run empty because He cannot become less of Himself nor does He lose a part of Himself as He expresses His mercy. And these “mercies” are available to us daily.

The Ark of the Covenant rested in the Holy of Holies. On top of it, there were two cherubim of gold each seated on each end of the ark with their wings touching. It was here that the mercy seat was located. In Exodus 25:22 God tells Moses it's function. God says, *“²² There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you...”* It was the place where the blood was sprinkled so that Moses could meet with Him. Because of Christ, there is no need for a mercy seat, for Christ is our mercy seat. And now we can all enter into the presence of God, meet with Him through His Word, because he has deposited within us His Holy Spirit and this is made possible by His mercies toward us. What Jesus Christ has done in the past, we now have the authority over our flesh and the power to submit to the spirit for there is no longer any debt and our hearts have been made new. This is the result of the mercies of God. And those mercies are new every day. In the book of Lamentations, a description of the devastating judgment of God on His rebellious people, the author writes in the middle of this acrostic poem,

²² *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;
 ²³ they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

In Christ, our mercy seat, is where our transformation begins. We keep our eyes on His mercies, and we stop living for and looking like the world. How does this happen? By being transformed by the renewal of your mind. We seek to know God through His Word and prayer, by sitting under the preaching of the Word, and by being in fellowship with other believers. We fill our minds with truth, so that we can spot the lies of the world. God grows us along the way by testing. How will we respond to testing? Will we

trust that what God says is true or will I give in to the ways of the world when difficulty comes? All this can only be done by His unending mercies as He is aware of our weakness and struggle to believe.

HIS MERCY, OUR FUTURE HOPE - GLORIFICATION

We have seen God's mercy in our salvation and our transformation. Turn with me now to 1 Peter 1:3-7, as we look at the mercy of God in our future hope of glorification.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

This mercy has granted us salvation and not salvation only for the moment but salvation for eternity. The inheritance we receive via mercy, is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading and it is kept for us. His mercy is so strong and the supply so great, our inheritance doesn't fade or deteriorate due to our sinful struggles and failings. And not only by God's mercy is our eternal inheritance kept, but by the same mercy we are being guarded. So, while we wait for the reality of our faith to manifest itself at the appearing of Jesus Christ, we can take comfort as we face trials.

I know that many of you have faced trials that I have not faced, and, actually, can't imagine facing. Some of you have lost spouses and children. Some of you are facing health issues of your own or those you help care for. And for others, the trials in your relationships. But, take heart today, in the midst of your trial, you have hope. Not a worldly hope, "I hope this works out.", but a hope that is guaranteed for you, not based on your record, but according to God's great mercy. And, these trials that you are facing are to prove the genuineness of your faith. You are an encouragement to me, because I know what some of you have been through, and I know what some of you are going through, and you are still here. What does it mean to have or know the mercy of God in our trials? The mercy is that your trials are not judgment and they have a purpose and that they will end. Those trials are the processes which God uses to produce in us a genuine faith. Whether we respond well or not, God is not judging our response to the trial, he is producing in us something that is eternal. Brothers and sisters, that genuine faith that God says is more precious than gold, will be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

HIS MERCY, THE HEART OF GOD – RECEIVE IT

Now let's turn to Matthew 9:10-13.

¹⁰ And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹² But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn

what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

The Pharisees dedicated their lives to knowing God's Word, applying it in service to Him. They worked diligently to follow the rules and rituals and even added more. The name *Pharisee* probably is derived from the Hebrew word for "separate;" thus the Pharisees were the "separate ones."² And why would they want to separate themselves from everyone else? To be holy or at least appear that way. They believed what they were doing was pursuing and attaining the righteousness of God. They had to believe they could cover their sin debt by sacrifice and obedience to the law. They didn't see the great chasm their sin created between them and God. They separated themselves from any object that was defiled. And as if that wasn't enough, they went even further separated themselves from the unholy and defiled people of their time. And they thought they were achieving the righteousness of God. In fact, in separating themselves from the unholy things and unholy people of the world, they were separating themselves from the God they thought they were pursuing and pleasing. How did they miss it? They had no mercy.

Jesus is comparing those who are well and those who are sick. Both groups were in need of the mercy of God. To the Pharisee, who should have known, Jesus says, "Go and learn", indicating they needed to study the passage of Hosea further. They didn't understand the passage because they didn't know the LORD. They thought they were righteous, they didn't see their need. Jesus is calling to those who SEE their need for mercy. He calls and heals those who know they are ill, who know they are undone before the majesty of God and need someone to heal their soul. Do you see your need to be healed? Or was your salvation enough and now you're on your way to maintaining what Christ established for you. Are you still trying to earn your acceptance from God? Is not His mercy enough? Or are you looking down at others who are hurting, who don't have it all together or don't give as much as you do, or so you think. You may be thinking, I'm a good person. I serve in the nursery. I tithe. I do this. I don't do that. Why are you doing what you are doing? Is it because in your heart of hearts, you think you can actually measure up to the standards of God? Maybe you truly have not "seen" or encountered the God of the Bible. The same holy God that Isaiah encountered, when he realized his desperate situation and said, "Woe is me!"

We see here in this Matthew passage that Jesus engaged with the outcasts, the lost, and the hurting. Not only did he engage with them, but he went as far as to touch them. The blind, the leper, and even the dead. How could a holy, righteous, perfect God descend into such darkness and touch the defiled and the unholy? Because of His mercy. This is exactly what the Pharisees missed. God's mercy isn't only a clearing of our debt in the books. Yes, there is a judicial response of God's grace and mercy, but it is so much more than that. It is more than full spiritual pardon, it's a mercy that moves the Holy to touch the unholy, and to heal. The holy, righteous, sovereign, omnipotent God, who knows all our deepest darkest sins from yesterday, today, and tomorrow, humbles himself to the point of moving into the lives and hearts of fallen sinful men and women. His mercy moves, the mercy of God acts. He isn't sitting on His throne, looking down on sinful man, saying, "I supplied the sacrifice, now receive it and obey me. I've done my part now you do yours" yet, how many of us sit on our "thrones" watching TV or surfing the internet, feeling sympathy, and compassion on those struggling in the world and even seeing the

² Brisco, T. V. (1998). [*Holman Bible atlas*](#) (p. 212). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

needs in our church, but sometimes we don't move. We leave our acts of mercy for someone else to do. What stops you from serving your brother and sister in Christ?

REFLECT AND RESPOND

The sheer fact that we are sitting in the church this morning is a testimony of God's mercy. It's a mercy that we made it here safe, it's a mercy we are not ill, it's a mercy we have each other, it's a mercy we have clothes, food, and shelter. It's a mercy that I was able to put this message together regardless of its outcome. Every single thing you have in your life a sign of God's mercy, even the trial you are facing at this moment. It is a mercy of God. Do you believe that? Or are you sitting here asking yourself or God, why me? Why not them?

God desires a people who are full of mercy. In our culture, that can be a sign of weakness, but for the saved, we no longer live under the prince of the power of the air, we no longer live under the power and values of this world. In God's economy, weakness is what is needed to enter His kingdom. It is those we know they are weak, helpless, and lost, that mercy extends down from the throne of grace to lift us up and seat us next to Him and grant us a full pardon.

Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us,

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus knows your plight, our condition, our weakness, do you?

We can be so quick and sharp, and merciless at times with our words, our thoughts, and our actions towards others in our own families, and in our church. May we brothers and sisters, grant mercy to one another daily, knowing it is what we need for ourselves. And may our mercy be motivated by love for Jesus. This is the heart of mercy, this is the heart of the gospel. Let's pray.