

I. Introduction:

- A. Our country is in serious trouble – our world is in trouble.
1. But it's not so much the Covid-19 virus as it is our world's **sinful reaction** to that virus and the hysteria surrounding it.
 2. Knowing that our God controls all things – great and small – Christians should assume that He directs every tiny molecule of that bug.
 3. And even if any of us become infected, Jehovah has already ordained whether we will succumb to it or eventually toss it aside like a spring-time cold.
 4. There are dozens of ways in which we might more useful and glorious to God if we were sick than in our current good health. But that doesn't mean we should tempt the Lord by exposing ourselves and others.
- B. The problem is that the world refuses to recognize God's sovereign control of this plague – **and** last week's earthquake in Utah – **and** the tsunami of locusts sweeping through parts of Africa & the Middle East right now.
1. God, in His infinite wisdom most likely has multiple purposes in this pandemic.
 2. He intends to use **sickness** in some people; **economic** upheaval in others; and **spiritual** matters in others.
 3. And as far as God's saints are concerned, the effect should be humble submission to His will.
 4. We should be praying for the sick – to repent before the Lord, while they are getting well.
 5. We should pray that those whose incomes are gone would turn to the Lord who owns the cattle on a thousand hills.
 6. We should be in prayer that God will use the great upsurge in internet ministries.
 7. We should hope that when the lock-down lifts, God's churches would be inundated with souls hungry for the Word of the Lord.
 8. These problems should help us all – saved and lost – to focus on important things – eternal things.
- C. And one of our prayers should be for mercy.
1. *"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah."*
 2. *"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."*
 3. So many things which our society has grown to love and worship are being consumed.
 4. We need the God's mercy. If we are not consumed ourselves *"it is of the LORD'S mercies."*
- D. I would like to spend a few minutes this morning considering aspects of the mercy of God.
1. I want this to be as practical as possible – as connected to today's problems as possible.
 2. If I get a little theological along the way, hang in there for a few minutes.

II. God's mercy is related to, but slightly different from, His grace.

- A. I hope over the years, I have implanted basic definitions for both **"mercy"** and **"grace."**
1. **"Divine GRACE"** is God's **unmerited favor** in a **positive** sense; God's abundant **kindness** toward sinners.
 2. **"Divine MERCY,"** on the other hand, is still unmerited favor and kindness – but in a **negative** sense.
 3. As Solomon just told us in **Lamentations** – *"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed."*
- B. Let's compare these two things by thinking about **angels**.
1. There are the two basic kinds of angels – fallen and unfallen – bad and good – holy angels and **"demons."**
 2. Here is a question for you thinking theologians –
 3. Has God ever been **GRACIOUS** toward **fallen** angels?
 - a. Has He been **positively favourable** to demons? Does God show **kindness** toward Satan's angels?
 - b. I can't think of a single scripture which declares that He has.
 4. On the other hand, has God ever been **MERCIFUL** toward those **fallen** angels?
 - a. In the fact that He has exercised long-suffering towards them and not yet judged them, yes, He has.
 5. Switching to holy angels – has the Lord ever been **MERCIFUL** toward them?
 - a. What have those angels done which necessitated the mercy of God? Nothing; they haven't sinned.

6. And again, on the other hand, God has been **GRACIOUS** toward His **unfallen** angels?
 - a. Whenever God blesses, those acts of kindness come out of His grace.
 - b. Whenever Jehovah sends an angel out in His service it is an act of divine grace.
- C. The Lord's treatment of His angels might be used to illustrate the difference between grace and mercy when it comes to humanity.
1. **I Timothy 5:21** describes God's angels as elect – "**eklektos**" – they were especially **chosen** by Jehovah.
 - a. That election was made prior to the rebellion of the Archangel Lucifer – before the creation of the world.
 - b. God did not elect His angels because they chose not to rebel.
 - c. That is the kind of definition of election which is commonly used by self-gratifying sinners.
 - d. Some unthinking people say, "**God elected me to salvation because He looked into the future and saw me repent and believe.**"
 - e. But that philosophy negates the basic definition of "**divine election**," taking it away from God and putting it into sinner's.
 - f. God's election of those angels was an act of grace, but not mercy.
 2. Secondly, as a result of their election, that group of angels did not go with Lucifer during the rebellion described in **Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28** and **Revelation 12**.
 - a. Their "**perseverance**" was a result of God's election, not its cause.
 3. A third gracious act toward those angels is that Christ has been made their Head (**Col. 2:10 & I Pet. 3:22**).
 - a. One of the things that this means is that they are eternally secure in their unfallen condition.
 - b. Again, it wasn't mercy which placed those angels under the sovereignty of God the Son; it was grace.
 4. And a fourth act of grace toward them has been to allow them to enjoy the presence of Jehovah and to permit their service Him according to His will.
 - a. Again this is grace – positive unmerited favour from the Lord.
 - b. It is not mercy – because, as being without sin, there was no need.
- D. Now, may I also point out that every aspect of the **grace** applied to God's angels also apply to God's saints.
1. Isn't it true that the Bible says the saints have all been chosen before the foundation of the world?
 2. God's saints have been **blessed, protected** and made **eternally secure** though the merits of Christ Jesus.
 3. And we have been **predestinated** to be **conformed** to the image of God's Son.
 4. By grace we may enjoy the presence of the Lord and have opportunity to serve Him forever.
- E. Mercy on the other hand is the fact that God didn't destroy us the first time that we personally sinned or at the moment of our birth as sinful children of Adam.
1. Notice again what David says at the end of **Psalms 138** – "**The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me; thy mercy, O LORD, ENDURETH FOR EVER; forsake not the works of thine own hands.**"
 2. There is a difference between mercy and grace, like the two poles of a battery or the two ends of a magnet.
 3. Mercy is a blessing from the negative side, while grace is a positive blessing, and both are eternal.

III. Another characteristic of God's mercy is that it can be earthly & temporal, or it can be eternal & spiritual.

- A. Step back with me two songs, and let's consider **Psalms 136**.
1. If there is any Psalm which proves these were all Hebrew songs, this is one of the clearest examples.
 2. There are 26 verses here, and every one of them contains the same refrain.
- B. Let's notice what **Psalms 136** teaches us about God's mercy?
1. "**O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.**"
 2. In passing, notice that the Lord is given different Names and descriptions: "**Jehovah**," "**Elohim**" & "**Adonai**."
 3. Beyond that, the primary two points of these verses is that God's mercy is **eternal**, and that He should be **praised** for His eternal mercy.

4. **Psalm 103:17** adds *“The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children.”*
5. Unfortunately for us, while God’s **mercy is eternal**, it is **not** necessary **enjoyed eternally**.
 - a. God will never cease to be merciful, because it is a part of His divine essence.
 - b. He is eternally merciful – just as He is omniscient or that He is eternally just.
6. But the Lord’s mercy is dispensed according to His sovereign will which is guided by His holiness.
 - a. Nothing outside of the Lord Himself ever obliges Him to act or to respond to us.
 - b. If there were such things, then He would cease to be God.
7. *“Oh, give thanks unto the God of gods; for his mercy endureth for ever.”*
8. **Since** our nation **needs mercy** today, doesn’t it mean that in some way it is **not here** at the moment?
9. We **need** mercy because right at the moment we are **not enjoying** that mercy – at least nationally.

C. Verse 4: – *“To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever.”*

1. Even in the midst of judgment, God’s great wonders are often wrought according to His mercy.
2. In fact, creation, formed through the Lord’s wisdom and omnipotence, displays God’s mercy.
3. *“To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever: The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.”*
4. Have you ever considered that the sun and even the moon were given to us through the mercy of God?

D. With verse 10 the Psalmist adds an even more strange ingredient into the equation.

1. *“To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever: And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy endureth for ever: With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever.”*
2. The Egyptian women, who were awaiting the return of their soldier husbands, didn’t look at it as such, but when the Lord destroyed Pharaoh and his army, it was an act of mercy.
3. It was an act of mercy at the very least toward Israel – and maybe to a few abused Egyptian wives as well.
4. Again, mercy has both positive and negative effects.
5. While God is being merciful to one person, the absence of mercy upon that man’s neighbor results in pain and loss.
6. *“To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever: And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever: But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever.”*

E. Everything about the delivery of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land displayed the mercy of God, even though the Egyptians and Amorites might want to argue that point.

1. **Verse 16** – *“To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: And slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever:*
2. *And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever: And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever: Even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever.”*

F. The Psalm concludes with a more conventional description of general, non-soteriological mercy.

1. **Verse 23** – *“Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever: And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever.*
2. *Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.”*

- G. One of the lessons of this Psalm is that God's mercy doesn't necessarily & always apply to spiritual salvation.
1. Israel's deliverance from Egypt was an act of God's mercy and grace, and yet many, if not most, of those people – "*religious people*" by the way – died in the wilderness and are not in Heaven today.
 2. The exodus shows us that the Lord bestows general mercy upon both the wicked and the just.
 3. Whether the theologian likes it or not, the Bible is pretty clear about this.
 - a. *Psalm 145:9* – "*The LORD is good to ALL: and his tender mercies are over ALL his works.*"
 - b. *Acts 17:25* – "*He giveth to ALL life, and breath, and all things.*"

- H. The United States of America desperately needs God's mercy.
1. The truth is that she *always has needed* that mercy, and she *always will*.
 2. Her citizens need the mercy and grace which results in eternal salvation.
 3. But while God's people pray for the salvation of their friends and family, we also need to pray for mercy in its secular form – deliverance from this epidemic and the economic problems we have created fighting against it.

IV. We can learn more about mercy by considering some of the Bible adjectives applied to the word.

- A. For example, in *1 Kings 3:6*, Solomon refers to "*God's GREAT mercy*" upon his father David.
1. That Hebrew word is most often translated "*great*" in the sense of "*big*" or "*large*."
 2. But it is also often rendered "*high*" and even "*loud*."
 3. Solomon might be saying that God's mercy towards David could be heard in heaven itself – it reached higher than the clouds.
- B. And *Psalms 86:5* says – "*For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and PLENTEOUS in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.*"
1. What does the word "*plenteous*" mean to you?
 2. Well it means the same thing to the Lord and to the translators of our Bible – "*abundance*."
 3. Despite what sin-blinded men might think, God's mercy is more abundant than the sands of the Sahara or drops of water in the seven seas.
 4. Especially when we compare God's holiness to man's sinfulness – that there is a single descendant of Adam left in this world is proof of God's plenteous mercy.
- C. Similar to this, *Peter* adds, in his first epistle – "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his ABUNDANT mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*"
1. God's mercy is "*abundant*" – it is more than we could ever use, because its source is the infinite God.
- D. At the birth of his son John, Zacharias, spoke about God's mercy and grace.
1. And the adjective he used was "*tender*."
 2. He was speaking about the coming Messiah when he said, "*Through the TENDER mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace*" – *Luke 1*.
 3. How is God's mercy tender? It is kind, gentle and sweet. It is with inward affection; affection of the heart.
- E. You may have noticed that I began with *Psalm 138* and thus far I haven't returned to it.
1. Let me correct that right now.
 2. The last verse says, "*The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me; thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever; forsake not the works of thine own hands.*"
 3. God's mercy is eternal; it is everlasting.
 4. This is the only verse in this Psalm which has our English word "*mercy*" in it.
 5. But the Hebrew word is also found in *verse 2* – "*I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy LOVINGKINDNESS and for thy truth.*"

- F. The Hebrew “*cheched*” (*kheh'-sed*) is usually translated “*mercy*” – but 30 times it is rendered “*lovingkindness.*”
1. This lifts our subject from what may be cold, academic and judicial to something warm and personal.
 2. Our nation needs the mercy of God – but what kind of mercy? The “*lovingkindness*” variety.
- G. I was talking to a man on Thursday who said he didn't know how Americans can cope without faith.
1. I know the man well enough to doubt his spiritual condition; I don't believe he is a child of God.
 2. He, like millions of others, may be praying for mercy, but what most want is the secular mercy of which most of *Psalm 136* is speaking.
 3. But when the Lord reaches down lifts up a dying sinner, giving him a new heart, and forgiveness of sin and a hope for heaven beyond this plague-stricken world, that is **more** than “*mercy*” – it is “*lovingkindness.*”
- H. This country and this world are filled with people – eternal souls, which will spend eternity in either heaven or the lake of fire.
1. Many of those people are praying for mercy.
 2. But most are thinking only of deliverance from this disease and the economic hardship it is causing.
 3. They don't need simple mercy, they need God's lovingkindness.

V. Focus for a moment on that aspect of God's mercy which involves salvation from sin.

- A. Please turn to *Ephesians 2* – “*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*
1. *But God, who is rich in **MERCY**, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*
 2. *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.”*
- B. *Titus 2:4-6* – “*After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 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; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”*
- C. *I Peter 2:9-11* – “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, **but now have obtained MERCY.**”*
- D. Perhaps you have a grandfather who is gasping for breath under the curse of this virus.
1. **I don't discourage** you from **praying** for him; **I urge you** to pray for his deliverance from this disease.
 2. But doesn't he have a greater problem than Covid-19? Isn't he still living in rebellion against God?
 3. Pray for God's mercy, but more specifically, pray for that mercy which is called “*lovingkindness.*”
 4. May God be merciful to us who are sinners, even more than to us who are sick.
- E. And what about you?
1. Are you sure of your eternal destiny – whether or not this virus comes your way?
 2. Have you in humble repentance put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?
 3. If you'd like to know more about God's eternal salvation, contact me.
 4. There is information on this website.
 5. “*Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*”