

Mercy

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We Have Received Mercy

We have been made alive through grace because God is so rich in mercy.

Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV) ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.

It can't be emphasized enough how great of a need that we have for the mercy of God.

What is Mercy?

Mercy cannot be spoken of without speaking of compassion. The words are interchangeable throughout scripture. To have mercy on someone is to have compassion on them. The word in the New Testament that is most often translated as compassion literally means to have your bowels twisted in the sense that you feel a deep urge to help those in need. This is the word that was used when the scripture says that Jesus looked at the multitudes and had compassion on them. His guts wrenched with an extreme urge to help them. What did he do? He healed all their diseases. He helped all that were oppressed of the devil.

Another way to understand mercy, when comparing what it means to grace, is that mercy is withholding from others what they deserve—in the sense of withholding negative consequences that someone deserves.

Grace, on the other hand, is giving something good that someone does not deserve. These two things often go hand in hand.

Truths about Mercy

- God desires mercy more than sacrifice
 - **Hosea 6:6 (NIV)** For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.
 - Quoted by Jesus in **Matthew 12:7 (NIV)** If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.
 - This means that God desires to have mercy on people even more than he desires for them to keep any law—even the sacrificial laws.
- Those who have been shown mercy must be merciful to continue in mercy
- Mercy triumphs over judgment
 - **James 2:12-13 (NIV)** ¹²Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!
 - This means that mercy sets people so free from judgement that it actually brings a rejoicing or gloating over judgement in a sense of triumph. Because of mercy, We Win!
- Those who are merciful are shown great mercy
 - **Matthew 5:7 (NIV)** Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- Mercy is necessary in forgiveness
 - **Matthew 18:32-35 (NIV)** ³²"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.' ³³Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."
- Mercy is so much a part of God's character that he proclaims it as part of his name
 - **Exodus 34:5-7 (NIV)** ⁵Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. ⁶And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate [merciful] and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."
- God's mercy should give us boldness before Him, even when we sin
 - **Hebrews 4:16 (NIV)** Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.
 - Because of God's character we can demand mercy for sins. He sacrificed His Son for this purpose. He expects that we would have full confidence in coming to his throne of grace and proclaiming "Have mercy on me!" And he always has the same response "YES!"
- God's mercies are new every morning

- **Lamentations 3:22-23 (NIV)** ²² Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
- Mercy brings new hope
 - **1 Peter 1:3-5 (NIV)** ³ 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, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.
 - Like seeing blue sky through a break in dark rain clouds.
- Mercy produces lovers of God.
 - **Luke 7:41-43 (NIV)** ⁴¹ "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.
 - **Luke 7:47 (NIV)** Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Thoughts on Mercy

- When you consider the fact that the only reason for mercy to exist is to provide compassion to those who deserve judgment, then it truly becomes absurd to believe that your sin can restrain the mercy of God toward you.
- Neither you, satan, or anyone else can throw the law up in Jesus's face and demand judgment upon your or anyone else's sin. He wrote the law, and he fulfilled it (Matthew 5:17). He can't be swayed by man's or satan's opinions about its enforcement. He has chosen to have mercy, and mercy triumphs over judgement (James 2:13).
- If you truly want to move heaven, cry out for mercy! We can always be certain of God's desire for mercy (Hosea 6:6).
- If God's grace is amazing and his mercy unbelievable, then our words and lives should clearly express that. We attempt living holy as a reaction to his grace and mercy, not as a fee to obtain them or keep them.
- Throughout my life I've known people who say we should be careful about emphasizing the mercy and grace of God over the need to live holy lives—thinking it is dangerous to cause people to believe that they can live however they want to. In that time, I've also learned how much more dangerous it is to not let them think that. If they don't see the kindness of God, then they won't know repentance (Romans 2:4). If they think they have to "keep all the rules" then they'll be twice as much a son of hell as any of the Pharisees of Jesus's day (Matthew 23:13-15). Trying to build a buffer of holy living around the message of grace and mercy out of our own distrust of people's character is no different than the message of the "brood of vipers" that looked to kill Jesus when he was on the earth.

- **Romans 2:4 (NIV)** Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?
- **Matthew 23:13-15 (NIV)** ¹³ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. ¹⁴ ¹⁵ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

Expanded Scripture References

Hosea 6:6 (NIV) For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

Matthew 12:1-14 (NIV) ¹ At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. ² When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath." ³ He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread--which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. ⁵ Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? ⁶ I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. ⁷ If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. ⁸ For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." ⁹ Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, ¹⁰ and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" ¹¹ He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹² How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." ¹³ Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. ¹⁴ But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Matthew 18:21-35 (NIV) ²¹ Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. ²³ "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. ²⁶ "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷ The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. ²⁸ "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. ²⁹ "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' ³⁰ "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. ³² "Then the master called the servant in.

'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn't you have had **mercy** on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵ "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Songs About Mercy

- Thy Mercy –Derek Webb (Caedmon's Call: In the Company of Angels)
- Every Ray –Kevin Prosch (Palanquin)
 - You took away the idol of my guilt. You're the one who saved me from myself. Taught me how to love, forgive the greatest debt, and the mercy you don't give is a mercy you don't get. Matthew 18:32-35, James 2:13
- Come Down –Kevin Prosch (Palanquin)