

## 188. Mercy By Arland Steen

### Opening

Centuries ago, as the Civil War came to an end, many Americans were filled with bitterness toward each other. Cries for justice and punishment came from many lips. Thankfully, President Abraham Lincoln recognized that justice wasn't what America needed at that moment. The focus, instead, needed to be on mercy, restoration, national healing and unity. This clear in his statement:

*I have always found that mercy bears richer fruit than strict justice.*

Lincoln had a better grasp on the importance of mercy than most of us do today. Many Christians take God's mercy for granted or forget about its importance in their lives. You can't imagine how many times I've heard this type of commentary:

*I don't know why this is happening to me. I don't deserve this. I've been to church a few times last month and I even tithed for the first time in months.*

It is as though people get used to living by a certain standard of life and when it doesn't happen as they want it to, they turn to pouting and blaming God.

It would be good for all of us to remember more regularly that if each and every one of us received what we deserve, we would all be crispy critters.

I don't deserve to have the life and nature of God. I don't deserve to be called to preach His Word. I don't deserve to be a pastor and gain whatever respect comes with that. I don't deserve any of that. It's all because of mercy. I hope you leave here today overwhelmed due to a sense of God's mercy working in your life.

The Bible makes clear that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23.

Our covenant with God isn't about what we deserved. It's about Jesus taking on Himself what He didn't deserve so we could have what we don't deserve.

Without His mercy, none of us would be saved.

We are who we are today because God is good. We are who we are today and have what we have today because God is merciful.

### The Father Of Mercies

The Bible is full of verses on mercy.

Ephesians 2:4 (New King James): *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,*

This is a wonderful verse to meditate and to say over and over again. There is not an individual who has ever lived, who is living or who will live who has not experienced the mercy of God. He does so much but just think about this aspect. If you were a dispenser of mercy, knowing people as we do, that would be a full-time job because people need your mercy.

2 Corinthians 1:3 (New King James): *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,*

Psalm 136 (New King James): *Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.  
² Oh, give thanks to the God of gods! For His mercy endures forever.*

- <sup>3</sup> *Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords!  
For His mercy endures forever:*
- <sup>4</sup> *To Him who alone does great wonders, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>5</sup> *To Him who by wisdom made the heavens, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>6</sup> *To Him who laid out the earth above the waters, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>7</sup> *To Him who made great lights, For His mercy endures forever—*
- <sup>8</sup> *The sun to rule by day, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>9</sup> *The moon and stars to rule by night, For His mercy endures forever.*
- <sup>10</sup> *To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>11</sup> *And brought out Israel from among them, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>12</sup> *With a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>13</sup> *To Him who divided the Red Sea in two, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>14</sup> *And made Israel pass through the midst of it, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>15</sup> *But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>16</sup> *To Him who led His people through the wilderness, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>17</sup> *To Him who struck down great kings, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>18</sup> *And slew famous kings, For His mercy endures forever—*
- <sup>19</sup> *Sihon king of the Amorites, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>20</sup> *And Og king of Bashan, For His mercy endures forever—*
- <sup>21</sup> *And gave their land as a heritage, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>22</sup> *A heritage to Israel His servant, For His mercy endures forever.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Who remembered us in our lowly state, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>24</sup> *And rescued us from our enemies, For His mercy endures forever;*
- <sup>25</sup> *Who gives food to all flesh, For His mercy endures forever.*
- <sup>26</sup> *Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever.*

Hebrews 4:16 (New King James): *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

These verses paint a beautiful picture for us. God doesn't want us to come begging and feeling so much condemnation that we hang our heads in shame. He said to come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy through our covenant with God.

### **Mercy & Grace**

A lot of people get mercy and grace confused. They are closely aligned and work together but they are not the same.

The grace of God works in different areas of life in different ways but the area most essential for us to know about is that grace is a divine deposit of the ability of God in a person which enables us to walk in God's ability throughout our lives.

2 Timothy 2:1 (New King James): *You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

2 Corinthians 12:9 (New King James): *And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

These scriptures obviously are referencing a source of power which produces inward strength instead of what we would call saving grace.

### **Mercy Is**

Mercy, on the other hand, is that element of God's heart that meets our needs when we don't have the faith or ability to see them met or due to the fact that we're not living correctly before Him.

We all have a fleshly nature and so we will make mistakes or simply yield to the flesh at times. We will also face situations that seem beyond our capacity in which we can remain strong in the Lord or as Brother Hagin put it "when faith seems weak and victory lost." If victory is lost you can't see it. What do you do?

It's during these times that God's mercy fills in the gaps for us so we're not left hanging in the wind.

God has an answer for every situation:

- If you don't know how-to walk in faith in a certain area, God's mercy will cover you
- If you can't receive your healing, God's mercy will cover you
- If you're just learning about giving and God's system to bless you, God's mercy will cover you
- If you're learning how to minister to people and how to pray for them, God's mercy will cover you
- You're learning how to talk correctly and you mess it up, God's mercy will cover you

So, mercy is the actual manifestation of grace operating in your life. It is God's intervention even though it's unmerited, undeserved and unwarranted.

Mercy is a vital part of our covenant with God, but we aren't intended to live solely by mercy.

Romans 1:17 (New King James): *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'*

God expects us to grow, learn His Word, and act on what we learn, growing thereby.

He wants us to assume responsibility for our spiritual lives.

If you're not there yet, though, come to God's throne boldly and His mercy will be available to you to produce deliverance.

So, grace is a divine deposit of the ability of God in a person which enables us to walk in God's ability throughout our lives.

Mercy is the application of that power, ability or favor to produce a change in your situation.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Qualifier: Mercy Covers Ignorance**

Sometimes we are ignorant of how spiritual things work and mercy covers that. So, if you do something that opens the door to the enemy but don't know any better, mercy will go to work for you.

Abimelech is a good Bible example.

Genesis 20

A heathen king received the mercy of God simply because he didn't know any better.

If you watch carefully, you'll notice that new believers often seem to be the ones receiving dramatic miracles.

I remember early on in our church, one guy came in. We might have had around a hundred people at the time. I was teaching a lot about healing and confession and how to receive from God. One day this man came to church. He was one who would listen, take notes and ask questions. So, this one particular day he gives a testimony and tells everybody how he was healed of cancer. I'm like, What? Cancer? I didn't even know you had cancer. My first inclination was, 'No! You're supposed to tell me! It works like

this: I lay hands on you. He said, "I just listened to what pastor said and acted on it." But understand, he was young in the Lord. He got his healing! He wasn't very experienced but God's mercy covered him!

God will take care of baby believers when they don't yet know the Word. As they grow in their knowledge of the Word, God expects them to live more and more by faith.

Sometimes we get overwhelmed by how much we don't know about the Bible and God's ways. This is also an area where God's mercy will step in for you. God is not going to allow something to wipe you out because you haven't yet had an opportunity to learn something. God's mercy fills in the gaps for things we don't know.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Qualifier: Faith**

Mercy does fill in the gaps, but we do need to have faith in God's mercy, especially if we are growing. Kenneth Hagin used to say, *"If you can't get what you need by faith, focus your faith on mercy and start calling on the mercy of God."*

So, start focusing on mercy, build faith for it and that will enable you to circumvent faith shortfalls in specific areas of your life.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Qualifier: Turn Away From Wrong Behavior**

This may seem to be contradictory:

*I thought mercy was about getting something that I didn't deserve. Wrong behavior means I don't deserve the blessing of God, but you say I have to run away from it?*

Yes, that's what the Word says, If you're a believer and you know the Word, to qualify for mercy, you need to turn away from wrong behavior.

Hebrews 10:26 (New King James): *For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.*

Jesus is our Sacrifice for sin. He took upon Himself the penalty for our sins that He didn't deserve so we could receive by faith the life in Him that we didn't deserve. This process is no longer available where deliberate, ongoing, willful sin is concerned. Someone who knows better but makes a lifestyle choice that is counter to the Word of God disqualifies themselves for the mercy of God.

Remember Hebrews 4:16?

What is a time of need in your life? It's when you're facing something you can't handle.

We might call it adversity, a mountain or an issue but it's something that is between you and where you believe God wants you to be.

You could almost rephrase the verse like this: *Come boldly to the throne of grace that you may obtain mercy to overcome adversity."*

### **Sticky Statement**

Know that God's mercy is available to you and don't stress over things you don't know.