



02 May 2025

Mercy

Mercy is one of the most common words in *church language*. It is frequently paired with grace, *grace and mercy*.

Mercy

Mercy. What is it?

An Old Testament word for mercy is rooted in the idea of loving deeply, and so then leads to actions of compassion, pity. It is sometimes said that God in His *grace* gives me what I do *not* deserve, and in His *mercy* He withholds what I *do* deserve. There is truth in that, but remember that mercy like grace is active, not passive. Mercy gives, not just withholds. Neither is mercy theoretical, but actual, active. Mercy does not condone sin, but is patient and loving with the sinner. One writer suggests, “Mercy is God’s active compassion that He demonstrates to the miserable.”

God is merciful and showers us with His mercy. King David declared that God’s “mercies are very great” (1 Chronicles 21:13). The apostle Paul tells us that God is “rich in mercy” (Ephesians 2:4).

The apostle Peter wrote that in God’s mercy He is patient, “not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance” (1 Peter 1:9). Then, when God saved us, Paul told Titus, He saved us “not on the basis of deeds which we did in righteousness, but in accordance with His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He richly poured out upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior” (3:5-6).

As believers God’s mercy should motivate us to present ourselves as living sacrifices to God for all of our life and service (Romans 12:1).

God is merciful. We are to be merciful. Jesus said, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36). Give mercy to others just as God has given you mercy. James strikes a loud chord, “judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment” (2:13). This runs contrary to our fallen nature, which says “Give me mercy, but give him what he deserves!” As God’s people redeemed by His mercy we must be merciful to others. Question: Do you focus on mercy as much as you do justice?

Mercy should flow from us to others in every area of life. Briefly, note a few specifics.

- Mercy to help people with physical needs. The Bible is rich with examples. Recall Jesus' words in Luke chapter 6. "Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. ... love your enemies and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil people. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (30, 35-36).
- Mercy to forgive. Forgiving others by definition is an act of mercy, just as God's forgiving us is an act of mercy. As the apostle Paul wrote in Colossians chapter 3, "put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so must you do also" (13).
- Mercy to be patient with others. We have just seen that in Colossians chapter 3. As well, Paul told the church at Ephesus, "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:1-4).
- Mercy to correct others. The apostle Paul instructed Timothy, "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (1 Timothy 4:2). Then he directed the churches in Galatia, "Brothers and sisters, even if a person is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual are to restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you are not tempted as well" (6:1).

Mercy is one of the most common words in *church language*. Make sure it is one of your most common qualities and actions.

Pastor Lyle