

# Just How CAN We Be Merciful?

Passage

Attribution

## 1. *Mercy is Commanded!!*

- Following the incident of the floating axe-head,
- And the blinding of the Syrian warriors that followed,
  - one of the servants of the king of Syria told him that Elisha, the great Prophet of God knew EVEN the things this king said in his bedroom (2 Kings 6:11)
  - The king of Syria sent soldiers to capture Elisha, and Elisha was informed of such, and they came to Dothan and surrounded that city.
  - Elisha's servant went and informed Elisha of what was happening.
  - Elisha responded with that famous verse:

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<sup>16</sup> So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." (2 Kings 6:16)

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- When Elisha's servants came down with Elisha, he saw the huge Syrian army and were overcome with it.

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**2 Kin 6:21–23** Now when the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?" **22** But he answered, "You shall not kill them. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." **23** Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master. So the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel.

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- So mercy ought to inspire and enable us to take on even the largest of tasks, when we believe it to be the Lord's desire for us...
- Solomon spoke of mercy a number of times in the Book of Proverbs...including:

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**Prov 3:3** Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart,

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- This suggests that it is entirely possible for even believers to allow mercy to escape their hands and forsake BOTH mercy and Truth!
- This seems like it is speaking of our responsibility, as believers, to communicate and demonstrate the truth to those around us!
- Have you ever thought of bearing witness to those around us as an act of mercy?

- It surely is!
- There are many other instances in which a believer has opportunity to show mercy.
  - Solomon stacks the failure to show mercy alongside of the failure to speak the truth! - Be that in our witness of some fashion - in our lives.
  - It seems that a failure to demonstrate mercy when we have the opportunity is, indeed a serious matter!

## ***2. We Need God’s Enablement to Be Merciful in the Manner and to the Extent that He Wishes***

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*Hos 12:6 So you, by the help of your God, return; **Observe mercy and justice**. And wait on your God continually.*

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- We note the four things that are connected here, of which mercy is one...
  - In this passage, God is saying that Israel has “encircled” Him with lies!
  - He tells them to do the 4 things we are talking about:
    - Return
    - Observe Mercy
    - “and Justice”
    - Wait on God continually (pretty much the opposite of what prompted the “return” earlier.
  - Again we note that showing mercy is in some pretty stern company!

## ***3. Showing Mercy is a Characteristic of Our Walking With God***

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*Luke 6:36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.*

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- This was a part of of what Jesus spoke of and what some have called “Rules for Kingdom Living”
  - It is lumped in with other extremely important Christian ideals
    - Loving Your Enemies
    - Turning the Other Cheek
    - Being Generous in our caring and giving to others who need.
    - Giving to ANYONE who asks of you
    - Do not retaliate
    - Treat others as you want them to deal with you.
    - Be careful that you do not give or treat others ONLY in order to get something back
    - Jesus summed up in 6:35 - “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

- He then goes on and tells us to “be merciful just as your Father in Heaven is merciful”.
  - It is interesting that v36 starts with “Therefore” which puts, once again, being merciful in company with some other serious character qualities!

#### ***4. It is an Effective Way to Bring Others to Contrition or Repentance***

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*Rom 12:20–21 Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

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- Showing mercy is an excellent way to bring men to repentance
  - Refers to an ancient Egyptian custom in which a person who wanted to show public contrition carried a pan of burning coals on his head.
  - The coals represented the burning pain of his shame and guilt.
  - When believers lovingly help their enemies, it should bring shame to such people for their hate and animosity
  - Just as a note, this is pretty much a quote of Prov. 25:21, 22
- We also note that it, at least in part, by showing mercy that we refuse to be overcome by the evil in the world around us!

#### ***5. It is Also a Demonstration that We Are In the Family of God!***

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*Col 3:12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;*

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- Paul gives a list of what changes in character/world view that are a part of the new Christian nature.
  - “Therefore” refers to the work of Christ mentioned just before
  - “the elect of God, holy and beloved” - speaks of the change in our standing before God that enables us to do what follows...
  - Tender Mercies may also be rendered “heart of compassion.”
    - It is a Hebraism that connotes the internal organs of the human body as used figuratively to describe the seat of the emotions (cf. Matt. 9:36; Luke 6:36; James 5:11).
- Here again we see mercy in some stout company
- And so we see that Mercy is intended to be a thing that Believers demonstrate

#### ***6. Characteristic of believers.***

- David, when speaking of the heritage of the Righteous, said:

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*Ps 37:26 He is ever merciful, and lends; And his descendants are blessed.*

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- It is interesting that, even in the OT era, before Christ, it was recognized that mercy was a noted characteristic of believers.
  - How different that is than our own era!
- Isaiah noted that the righteous and the merciful as a demonstration of righteousness are appreciated greatly by the society around them, so much so that, unlike most people, if they perish, it causes little or no mourning.
  - Isaiah 57:1–2

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*The righteous perishes,  
And no man takes it to heart;  
Merciful men are taken away,  
While no one considers  
That the righteous is taken away from evil.*

*<sup>2</sup> He shall enter into peace;  
They shall rest in their beds,  
Each one walking in his uprightness.*

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- In contrast to the evil leaders, who were engaged in debauchery and self-indulgence, were the righteous who were removed from impending divine judgments.
  - The righteous do suffer by oppression and distress at what is going on around them, but they die in faith and enjoy their eternal reward.

## **7. *Mercy Ought to be Should be shown in a number of ways:***

### **1) With cheerfulness.**

- Romans 12:6–8

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*<sup>6</sup> Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; **he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.***

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- We ought not to show mercy to those who are needy in any other than a pleased and cheerful manner.
  - Frequently, this gift accompanies the gift of exhortation.
  - With **cheerfulness.**
    - This attitude is crucial to ensure that the gift of mercy becomes a genuine help, not a discouraging commiseration with those who are suffering (cf. Prov. 14:21, 31; Luke 4:18, 19).

## 2) To our brethren.

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*Zech 7:9* "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion Everyone to his brother.'

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- Thru Zechariah God gave counsel to the Israelites that they start doing what they had not been doing to their brethren.
  - So also ought we demonstrate mercy to those amongst whom God has placed us.
  - The reference here is not just to our family or Church group - it is to all of those amongst whom He has placed us...

## 3) To those in distress.

- We ought especially have our eyes and understandings peeled and looking around us for those in need of mercy.
  - There are many all-around who have need whom we come across.
  - In the parable of the good Samaritan this was the point of our Lord Jesus...after the communication of the content of the parable, He said:

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*Luke 10:37* And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

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- It is not just a matter of being nice to everyone - there are many who have real need and it is to those that ought to extend our mercy.
- This especially applies to to poor and needy:

## 4) To the poor.

- It is interesting that failing to seek to meet the need of the poor is tied in a number of places to actually oppressing them as well as "reproaching" the Maker of both of them and of ourselves.

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*Prov 14:31* He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.

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- Though it is not by any means a way of earning spiritual points with God, we can say it is a way of demonstrating the reality of our dedication to God and the truth of our repentance and desire to be right in our pursuit of what shows off the goodness of the Lord.
  - We show righteousness and holy character, In part by the act of showing mercy to the poor.
  - In so doing, we invite the blessing of God!

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*Dan 4:27* Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity."

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## 5) To backsliders.

- Just as the father had “compassion” (same word as is given as “mercy” elsewhere) so also we ought to show forth the Father’s Love to those who have wandered from Him.

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*Luke 15:18–20 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” ’ 20 “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.*

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- Not only for the backslidden, but also for what the Bible speaks of as an “such a man” or “offender”

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*2 Cor 2:6–8 This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, 7 so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. 8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.*

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- Those who have slidden back or wandered from the good grace of the Lord are in great need of our merciful embrace and we ought do our level best to seek to give it to them.
- Interestingly, we ought even be careful to see to it that we extend mercy to those animals with whom we come into contact.

## 6) To animals.

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*Prov 12:10 A righteous man regards the life of his animal, But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*

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- This Lit. says that the wise man has concern for the condition of his beast, while the wicked has no concern even for people.
  - This is a lesser to greater argument...
  - It sets the perspective for both the NOT having of mercy for men (and its’ wickedness), as well as the goodness of mercy for the animal.

## 8. Upholds the throne of kings.

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*Prov 20:28 Mercy and truth preserve the king, And by lovingkindness he upholds his throne.*

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- Likewise, this sets for us the great significance of showing mercy to others.
  - In God’s eyes Mercy is essential to life and manner of a good King.
  - If it is this significant for the King, how significant is it to you and I?

## 9. Blessedness of showing.

- Scripture is very clear that, though we do not “do mercy” in order to gain other stuff, there is a real blessedness in showing mercy!

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**Prov 11:17** *The merciful man does good for his own soul, But he who is cruel troubles his own flesh.*

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- We note the contrast between demonstrating mercy and being the opposite - cruel!
  - While there are certainly great benefits to those to whom mercy shows; the Bible is clear that failing to do so is actually “damaging” to our being. (mental and emotional)
- Failure to be merciful when presented with the opportunity or need is actually sin before God to believes.
  - On the other hand, giving mercy to the poor brings great blessing from God.

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**Prov 14:21** *He who despises his neighbor sins; But he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.*

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- The most familiar statement concerning this idea is our Lord’s statement in the Beatitudes:

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**Matt 5:7** *Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.*

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- We should note also that there are severe denunciations against those who do not show mercy...

## ***10. Denunciations against those devoid of.***

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**Hos 4:1** *Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: “There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land.*

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- A “charge” is a legal claim implying that there is some knowing transgression of the law or command of God.
  - It is clear that God desires His people, and thus the body of Christ to be known as ones who are merciful.
  - We surely do not want to contribute to the detriment of the Name of God in the world...
- It is interesting to note that mercy is, in a very real way, one of the things that God uses to maintain the health and life of His kingdom.

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**Hos 4:3** *Therefore the land will mourn; And everyone who dwells there will waste away With the beasts of the field And the birds of the air; Even the fish of the sea will be taken away.*

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- In Matthew 18:23-25 - Just after the parable of the lost sheep and the offended brother we read a parable concerning Forgiveness:
  - Peter had asked (in the context of the prior two parables...
  - Matthew 18:21–22 - Beginning of Jesus’ Instruction About Forgiveness

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<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

<sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

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- Jesus responds to him and says:

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**Matt 18:23–25** Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. **24** And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. **25** But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

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- It is interesting to see the way that the Lord portrayed His teaching concerning forgiveness of debt...right along with the idea of mercy mixed in!
- Following in just a few chapters - He once again rebukes the Scribes and Pharisees in no uncertain terms once again:

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**Matt 23:23** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the **weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith.** These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.”

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- These men were Legalists and yet had completely forsaken some critical aspects of obedience to God!
  - And it is interesting just what those matters were!
  - Justice, Mercy and faith in God!
  - Those three, Jesus says, are “weighty”!
    - The word means heavy or important, and speaks a burden that requires effort to carry, but in this context **MUST** be carried because they are a part of the Law.
- James says, in...

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**James 2:13** For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

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- He demonstrates to us the difference between Judgment and Mercy - they are **NOT** compatible with each other...
- James’ point is
- Judgment and mercy are both a part of dealing rightly with those around us...
  - A person who shows no mercy and compassion for people in need demonstrates that he has never responded to the great mercy of God, and as an unredeemed person will receive only strict, unrelieved judgment in eternal hell (cf. Matt. 5:7).

- **James insists that Mercy triumphs over judgment.**
  - The person whose life is characterized by mercy is ready for the day of judgment,
  - and will escape all the charges that strict justice might bring against him
  - because by showing mercy to others he gives **genuine evidence** of having received God's mercy.
- I pray that we will all be those who give this evidence that we know the True and Living God.