

**FOUNDATION OF FAITH!**  
**GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT**  
**PART 17**  
**THE GIFT OF MERCY**

This morning we will be finishing up looking at the gifts of the Spirit or the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to the church to build up the body of Christ and to bring glory to God. Next week we will look at the topic, Discovering Your Gifts. And so this morning we are going to be looking at the gift of mercy and Paul speaks of this gift in Romans chapter 12, and we are going to begin reading in verse 4, where Paul tells us, **“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 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; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”** Romans 12:4-8.

And did you notice that we are to show mercy with cheerfulness, not sadness or with despondency, unhappiness, anger, bitterness and-so-on. We are to show mercy with joy! And obviously this is another important gift that is needed in the body of Christ!

Now here in Romans 12:8 the Greek word that Paul uses for “**mercy**” is ELEEO, (el-eh-eh’o), and this word means, “to have pity, to be compassionate.” When we think of mercy that comes from the Scriptures, we think of not getting what we deserve. And yes, that is a very simple and yet it is a very accurate definition. You see, we are all sinners, we are all unrighteous and thus we deserve to go to Hell. But God steps in and because of His great mercy we don’t get what we deserve.

Now when people do things against us we don’t want them to see any mercy, we want them to get justice, to get what they deserve. But think about that for a minute. How many people are going to cry out for God’s justice to be placed upon their lives? You would be a fool if you did! Justice is getting what you deserve. It is an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth mentality. Thus, we cry out for the mercy of God upon our life so we can be spared the death sentence of Hell, not getting what we deserve, so that we can obtain what we don’t deserve, life with the Lord, which speaks of His grace that He gives to us.

And thus we see that there is this dilemma or predicament that God is in you might say. You see, since God is holy and righteous He just can’t overlook sin, He must have a basis for which He can extend His mercy to us. And that basis is found in God becoming flesh and paying the penalty for our sins so that we can obtain God’s mercy in our life. It is as Psalm 85:10 tells us, “**Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed.**” That is only done through the cross, where mercy and truth have met. Also, Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21, “**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**”

What more can you say? God who was sinless became sin for us. The sins of the world were placed on Him so that we could obtain the righteousness of God by faith in Christ. God became sin, in a sense, so we could become sinless and tragically, many reject this free gift of God, eternal life by grace through faith in Jesus!

Now let me clarify this for you. We must understand that Jesus did not become a sinner on the cross for us, but He paid in full the penalty for our sins, He endured the wrath of God upon His own life that was for us so that we could be spared that judgment and live with God eternally! Thus, our sins are not counted against us and because of that, because of what God has done for us, we should share with others the love that God has shown us! It truly is an amazing grace; it truly is a sweet sound in our ears because we know that God loved us so much that He saved a wretch like you and me! Praise the Lord for that! Remember what Paul said in Romans 6:23, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the [free] gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

And remember our study of God the Father in our Foundation of Faith series, as we looked at the many attributes of God. Mercy is another attribute of God that really flows out of His rich love. You see, God is love and He demonstrates that love by His mercy that He extends to us. Now we hear a lot about God’s love today, which is rich and deep, but people also forget that He is a God of justice.

Remember when God was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness, and Abraham intercedes for them. And Abraham said in Genesis 18:25, **“Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”** Now what Abraham said is true, God is righteous, He is just and He would not destroy the righteous with the wicked. But what Abraham said was like a double-edged sword. God will do what is right, that is justice! But we can't stand before God in our own righteousness and ask for His justice, for we will lose.

All we can do is come humbly to Christ and ask Him to forgive us of our sins and to be our Lord and Savior. It is out of that gift of God that His mercy flows and we will not receive God's justice, but His mercy. If you are not in Christ, you will receive His justice, but you don't want that because the penalty you will pay is eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire!

Now remember the Law of First Mention? What that means is that the first time a word is used in the Scriptures it sets the tone on how that word should be defined throughout the Scriptures. Interestingly enough the first mention of **“mercy”** in the Scriptures is found in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. In Genesis 19:19 we read, **“Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life . . .”**

You see, God had mercy upon Lot and spared him while the rest of the people were destroyed. Lot deserved death but God spared him. But why did God spare Lot and not the others? I think II Peter chapter 2, beginning in verse 6, gives us some insight to why God was merciful to Lot and why He poured out His justice upon the others. We read, **“and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)--then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.”** II Peter 2:6-9.

Now I don't believe Lot was a righteous man because of his actions, for the Scriptures tell us that none are righteous before God in the sense of being perfect, without fault, without sin. I believe it was because of his faith. And thus, God extended His mercy to Lot based upon Lot's faith and I think God used Lot as an example for us, he, in a sense, was a type of the church. You see, we are saved by faith, not by our righteousness, and God will not pour out His judgment upon us, who are righteous by faith, but spare us from that judgment. God knows how to deliver us and punish the unjust. On the other hand, since God is a just God, if you reject Jesus, then you will receive His judgment, He can't ignore your sin and you can't atone for your sin, only Jesus can and has but you must believe in Him by faith!

Now before we look at what God expects of us in regards to mercy, I think it would be good to look at the Scriptures that speak of God's mercy. And understand this, some 41 times in the Bible God declares that His mercy is everlasting. Let us not forget that! I think this is an important attribute of God that we need to understand and an important gift that the Holy Spirit gives to the church and thus, we need not only to understand it, but live it!

### **THE MERCY OF GOD**

#### **1. EXODUS 34:5-7**

In speaking of the mercy of God we are told in Exodus 34:5-7, "**Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.'**"

You see, God's mercy is found in His nature. It flows from His love. You can't see God without seeing His mercy. And yes, even in His judgment He is ready to extend His mercy to all who will receive it. God can't be more or less merciful, it is just an attribute of God and it is rich and it is deep!

## 2. **NUMBERS 14:18**

Listen to what we are told of the mercy of God in Numbers 14:18, **“The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.”**

Did you hear that? God is abundant in mercy! The Hebrew word is RAB, which speaks of “abounding, exceedingly, full, great, increase, (too, very) much, multiply, plenteous, sufficient.” That is the best we can do with our earthly words to describe God’s mercy, but to use a phrase of today, “It doesn’t get any better than that!” And I don’t think anyone of us will say I wish God showed me more mercy, He is abundant in mercy! If you feel that you need more of God’s mercy in your life, then you don’t understand that it is already there, abundantly and freely given to you in Christ!

## 3. **NEHEMIAH 9:31**

In Nehemiah 9:31 we are told, **“Nevertheless in Your great mercy You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them; For You are God, gracious and merciful.”**

Not only is God’s mercy abundant but it is great and think about this for a minute. God has the right to destroy us but because of His great mercy, we live!

## 4. **PSALM 51:1**

Another place we see the mercy of God described is in Psalm 51:1 where we are told, **“Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.”**

Prior to David's sin with Bathsheba he asked God to judge him according to his righteousness. Now that David sees the reality of that, and how unrighteous he is before God, he cries out for God's mercy! That is all we can do. And David understands how rich, how tender the mercy of God was toward him and we should see that in our own lives also. That God's mercy is rich, it is deep it is tender!

### 5. **PSALM 100:5**

Listen to what the Psalmist tells us in Psalm 100:5, "**For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.**"

Did you see that? Did you notice how long the mercy of God lasts? What a comfort that should be to us, that God's mercy is everlasting, it will not end, it will never end towards us!

### 6. **PSALM 103:8, 11**

Another place we see the mercy of God mentioned is in Psalm 103 verse 8 and verse 11 where we are told, "**The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. . . . For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him.**" Notice what the Psalmist tells us here. Our God is abounding in mercy and the Psalmist tries to help us get a handle on it by saying God's mercy is as far as the heavens reach. Scientists tell us that the universe is expanding, and it has been estimated that our universe right now is some 12 billion light years, and growing! Thus, so is God's mercy towards us! It is inexhaustible, it is everlasting, it will never end! It extends farther than we could ever imagine!



## 7. LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23

And the last one we will look at in regards to the mercy of God is found in Lamentations 3:22-23, where Jeremiah tells us, **“Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.”**

This is one we can all use, especially me. Every night I go to bed feeling like a failure, like I have blown it, I can wake up the next morning refreshed knowing that God’s mercy towards me is new every morning! How great is that? Do you see how rich, how deep, how wonderful the mercy of God is towards us!

So, as we have seen, God, by His very nature, is merciful. Man, on the other hand, is not. Man is very vengeful; he is very retaliatory in his actions. You know what I am talking about here. It is basically, “If you do this to me then I will do that to you” mentality. In fact, we even see ABC with their new fall show, “Revenge” and the premise here is this women is getting back at those who wronged her family! I don’t know how many of you remember the movie from years ago, back in 1982 to be exact, called “Death Wish” starring Charles Bronson. It was a story of a husband whose wife is brutally killed and sexually assaulted as well as his daughter and he becomes a vigilante killing all the bad guys. What really sticks out is that I as well as many, many other people were cheering for him to get his revenge and kill the bad guys. It is easy to fall prey to that kind of behavior. God will take care of those who have rejected Him, we are not to do that!

Now, obviously when God created man he was very good and within him was the ability to be merciful, it flowed from his life until sin entered the picture. Think about it, the first thing Adam said when God asked him what happened was he blamed God for making Eve; it was her fault for his failure. No mercy there!

And so when we are called to extend mercy to someone, many times the dark side comes out and instead of mercy we belt them, or mouth off, or do something that is retaliatory in nature rather than forgiving. The only problem with that is what we are manifesting in our lives is not the nature of God! You see, as children of God it is important that we show mercy to others. In fact, Paul tells us in I Corinthians 11:1, **“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”** You see, the nature of Jesus should flow from our lives but that will only happen as we surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit and walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Let’s look at some examples from the Scriptures regarding the mercy that should flow from our lives, what the Lord is calling for us to do, what He is calling for us to be!

**THE MERCY OF GOD IN US AND FLOWING FROM US****1. MATTHEW 5:43-48**

Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 5:43-48, **“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”**

Of course it is easy to be nice to those who are nice to us. But Jesus wants us to go that extra step further in love, to reach out to those who are not nice. You see, we are to be different. We are to do to others what they don't deserve and as we do we are demonstrating the love and character of God to others! We are showing them the mercy of God, the mercy that God has shown us!

## 2. ROMANS 12:19-21

Paul, in Romans 12:19-21 tells us, **“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. 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.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”**

You see, Paul is saying that the human desire is to avenge the wrong that was done to you. But God wants us to forget that wrong, as hard as that may be, and love those who are coming against you because by doing good it might bring them to repentance. In fact, you can get so wrapped up in fighting for your rights that you are overcome by evil. Be careful!

A great example of what should be done regarding evil is given to us by Abraham Lincoln. You see, Massachusetts’s congressman, Thaddeus Stevens, wanted to completely crush the south after the Civil War. But Abraham Lincoln wanted to make peace, to heal the wounds and forgive. But Thaddeus Stevens slammed his fist down on the table and said, “Mr. Lincoln, I think enemies ought to be destroyed!” Abraham Lincoln very quietly responded and said, “Mr. Stevens, don’t I destroy my enemy when I have made him my friend?” You see, destroy the enemy with the love of God, point them to Jesus and make them your friend, a child of God. May we learn from Lincoln’s example! May we extend the mercy of God to others!

### 3. EPHESIANS 4:31-32

In Ephesians 4:31-32 Paul tells us, **“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”**

Perspective is everything! Paul is saying to let it go. Don't hold on to all that anger, bitterness, and-so-on. If God forgave you, then you must forgive others. You can let that poison remain in you, drinking it up, but in the end you will be spiritually, emotionally and physically sick. And we do see that in the body of Christ. But there is a cure! You must give it to God and forgive! And if you can't do it for them, then do it for Jesus! Again, may we have the mercy of God not only flow into our lives, but through us and may it touch the lives of others!

Now I think I can safely say that all of us want God to shine down His mercy upon us, but how many times do we ask for God's justice to be poured out upon our enemies? Someone cuts us off the road and we, being spiritual pray, “Lord, may there be a police officer with his radar gun to catch this guy. You know Lord, it is dangerous the way he is driving!” And that sounds great, but if you really think about it, that is the wrong attitude! We are not interested in safety, we want revenge. “He cut me off the road and he is speeding, Lord get him!” Not as spiritual when you look at it like that!

Listen carefully to what James tells us in James 2:13. He wrote, **“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”** If you refuse to show mercy to others, then God will do the same to you.

You see, James is speaking of showing mercy to people, not giving them what they deserve, why? Because we deserve death and our merciful God has given to us life through His Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, we should be merciful or God will judge us as we treat others.

It is as Luke 6:38 says, **“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”** And I think that even applies with the mercy we extend to others.

And here is one of those difficult passages in the Scripture and just listen carefully to what Jesus is saying here in Matthew 6:14-15. Jesus tells us, **“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”** Now I’m sure we can debate all the theological aspects of what was said here from now until the time the Lord returns. But let us not miss the point. Take it at face value. You need to forgive others, not just a suggestion, but a command.

And I think Jesus expounds on this when He speaks about forgiveness in Matthew chapter 18. Jesus tells the story of a king who wants to settle his accounts and one person owed him ten thousand talents. We don't know if that was silver or gold, but let's just say it was 16 million dollars, for Jesus was exaggerating the amount to make a point.

The man didn't have the money to pay the king back and thus, he and his family were going to be sold into slavery to pay off that debt, which of course was impossible for him to pay off. And so this man pleads with the king to have compassion upon him, to extend mercy upon him. And the king did, he forgave him his debt completely! And you would think that is great, right? Not so fast.

This man who was forgiven this debt had a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarri, not a lot, let's say 16 dollars. And this man did not have the money to pay him back, and so he begged the man to give him some time to pay it off, which was very possible. Instead of doing that, the man had this other servant thrown in prison, where he could not pay him back, and he refused to have compassion upon him, to extend mercy to him.

Well word got back to the king of what had happened and we read beginning in verse 32 of Matthew chapter 18, "**Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.**" Matthew 18:32-35.

Once again this is a heavy lesson that could be debated for years. But don't miss the point. God wants us to forgive. Again, it is not a suggestion; it is a command that is based upon what He has done for us! He has forgiven us, let's say 16 million dollars but in today's economy I guess that can be paid back. We need to update that dollar amount. Let's make it equal to our national debt, which was as of October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011: 14,708,954,989,764.06 or over 14 trillion dollars. We could never repay that back and that is the idea and yet God has forgiven us, can't we forgive someone who only owes us 16 dollars? God wants us to and if you can't, then you have to consider what Jesus is saying in Matthew chapter 6 and Matthew chapter 18. But don't make the mistake of watering those verses down, take them for what they are saying and forgive!

It is not that we deserve mercy or anyone deserves it, that is not what mercy is all about as this story illustrates for us. We are told,

A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death.

"But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for mercy."

"But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied.

"Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for."

"Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have mercy." And he spared the woman's son.

- Luis Palau, Experiencing God's Forgiveness



You see, if we deserved it then it would not be mercy but it would be a debt that the person owed us. Obviously none of us deserve mercy, the mercy of God and He freely extends it to us in Christ Jesus. Because of that, because of what He has done He wants us to extend that same kind of mercy to others because they don't deserve it, but they truly need it!

#### 4. **ROMANS 12:8c**

Here in Romans 12:8, in the verse regarding this spiritual gift of mercy that we have been looking at this morning, Paul tells us, “**... he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.**” Paul wants our mercy to be shown with cheerfulness. It is one thing to extend mercy to someone, but if you do it with your fist and teeth clinched, and anger in your heart, you might as well forget it. God won't accept that. Listen to a few other translations of this verse because I want to drive home this point that mercy is to be shown with cheerfulness, with the right heart attitude that is then manifested in the right actions.

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**... he who does acts of mercy, with genuine cheerfulness and joyful eagerness.**” The Living Bible puts it like this, “**... those who offer comfort to the sorrowing should do so with Christian cheer.**” And the New Living Translation puts it like this, “**... And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.**” You see, attitude is important and if you can't show mercy with cheerfulness, then you are really not showing the mercy of God towards others. No you are not and that is just the way it is!

There was a Christian lady who once said: “When my mother became old and needed someone to care for her, my husband and I invited her to come and live with us. I did all I could to make her comfortable. I cooked for her, did her washing, took her out in the car, and generally cared for all her needs. But while I was going through the motions outwardly, I was unhappy inside. Subconsciously I resented the interruption of our usual schedule. Sometimes my mother would say to me, ‘You never smile anymore. Why don’t you ever smile?’ You see, I was showing mercy, but I wasn’t doing it with cheerfulness.”

You see, there is a way of forgiving a man which pushes him further into the gutter; and there is a way of forgiving him which lifts him out of the mire. Real forgiveness is always based on love and not upon our rights. Real forgiveness is always based in mercy and not giving them what they deserve! I realize that I am taking a lot of time going over this, but I think it is important and I truly believe that we will not be able to extend the mercy that God desires us to extend apart from submitting to His Spirit!

And some of you might not even agree with me on this. You may think I am going too far. If you feel that way or you are not sure, let me share with you some Scriptures that will show you this is not just a good suggestion. To extend mercy to others is what God expects from us, it is a divine command and it is to be done with cheerfulness!

## **EXTENDING MERCY TO OTHERS, A DIVINE COMMAND!**

### **1. LUKE 6:36**

In Luke 6:36 we are told, “**Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.**” If we truly are a reflection of God, His representatives here on earth, then we should manifest His character in our life. We should show mercy to others just as He has shown mercy to us and is showing mercy to us every single day of our lives! And keep in mind that this word, “**merciful**” speaks of being compassionate towards others, actively not passively! That is the heart of God and it should be our heart also, having compassion, mercy towards others.

### **2. MICAH 6:8**

In Micah 6:8 listen to what the Lord says regarding mercy and what He desires of us. We are told, “**He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?**” Here it is: what is good, what God requires of us. We are to do what is right. We are to be merciful. And we are to walk with God humbly.

You see, God has shown us what He desires of us. First of all He wants us to do justly. In other words He is telling us that we need to be fair. Don't rip people off. Don't oppress people. Secondly He tells us that we are to love mercy or lovingkindness. To express to others the same mercy that God has shown us. And lastly He tells us that we need to walk humbly with our God. We need to be in fellowship with Him.

These are not rituals but they speak of a relationship. If your relationship with God is right you will treat your fellow man with righteousness and mercy. If your relationship with God is off, your relationship with man will be off and it is amazing what can flow from a heart that is not right with the Lord. Again, this is not a suggestion, it is a command, we are to be just in our actions, we are to love mercy or extend mercy with cheerfulness and we are to walk in humility before the Lord and if you do, if you walk in humility before the Lord, the other things will fall into place!

### 3. **ZECHARIAH 7:9-10**

In Zechariah 7:9-10 we are told, “**Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion Everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, The alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart Against his brother.’**” God’s desire is that we would reach out and show mercy to those around us instead of plotting evil against them.

Now are these statements by God outrageous? Of course not! He is asking us to have true justice, to show mercy, to have compassion towards people, not to oppress the less fortunate, and not to plot evil against another. The problem with doing these things is when your relationship with God is not right, your relationship with man will also be off, and thus, these things are not going to flow from your life. And the idea is we love mercy when it is shown to us, but we don’t like to show mercy towards others. We don’t like to be cheated.

Isaiah also picked up on this same thought in Isaiah 58:3-11, which says, **“Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?’ In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exploit all your laborers. Indeed you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, to make your voice heard on high. Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.”**

You see, they went through all the motions trying to feel good, but they were miserable instead. And they couldn't understand it. They lost the joy because they lost their relationship with God, they were not walking with Him and that showed in the way they treated others. Thus, if we do the things that God desires from us, if we are obedient to Him, then we will meet the needs of others and guess what? That joy will return, we will be satisfied and we will show justice, mercy and compassion towards others because it is the heart of God and if we are walking with Him His desires will be ours!

Now in saying all that I want you to think about this for a minute. How will people know you are a Christian? Is it the size Bible you carry around with you? Maybe it's the Christian tee-shirts you are wearing as you push your way into line? How about the Christian bumper-stickers on your car as you go speeding by the other cars yelling at those drivers for going so slow? What about going to church not just once a week, but twice? None of those things are a characteristic of a Christian. They are not a tell-tale sign of who you belong to.

You see, Jesus said in John 13:33-34, **“Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”** They will know you are Christians by your love, a love that is manifested in action, and it is out of that love that mercy flows.

I don't know how many of you remember the song, "They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love" I am probably dating myself here, but listen to these lyrics for a minute. Don't worry, I won't sing them, I will just read them, I will have mercy on you!

**They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love**

We are one in the Spirit  
 We are one in the Lord  
 We are one in the Spirit  
 We are one in the Lord  
 And we pray that all unity  
 May one day be restored

And they'll know we are Christians  
 By our love, By our love  
 Yes, they'll know we are Christians  
 By our love

We will walk with each other  
 We will walk hand in hand  
 We will walk with each other  
 We will walk hand in hand  
 And together we'll spread the news  
 That God is in our land

We will work with each other  
 We will work side by side  
 We will work with each other  
 We will work side by side  
 And we'll guard each man's dignity  
 And save each man's pride

All praise to the Father  
 From whom all things come  
 And all praise to Christ Jesus His only son  
 And all praise to the Spirit  
 Who makes us one

Make us one, Lord!

Make us one, Lord!

And we need to remember that when we speak of love it is not a passive word. God's love is active, not passive. Jesus said in John 3:16, "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**" Jesus, in His earthly ministry, went around doing good, and so should we. We need to extend mercy to those around us, have compassion on them. You see, it is not just forgiving the wrong they have done to you that is mercy. There is also having compassion upon those in need. Yes, one side is forgiving, but the other side is compassion. Remember what Paul said in II Corinthians 1:3, "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.**"

I want to leave you with this true story that takes the principle of mercy and places it into action, or at least it should. We are not going through these lessons to gain head knowledge alone, but to take what we have learned and apply it to our lives, living as God would want us to live. Charles R. Swindoll said:

A Greek class was given an assignment to study the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. These young theologs were to do an in-depth analysis of the biblical text, observing and commenting on all the major terms and syntactical factors worth mentioning. Each student was to write his own translation after having done the work on his commentary.



As is true in most language classes, a couple or three of the students cared more about the practical implications of the assignment than its intellectual stimulation. The morning the work was to be turned in, these three teamed up and carried out a plan to prove their point. One volunteered to play the part of an alleged victim. They tore his shirt and trousers, rubbed mud, catsup, and other realistic-looking ingredients across his “wounds,” marked up his eyes and face so he hardly resembled himself, then placed him along the path that led from the dormitory to the Greek classroom. While the other two hid and watched, he groaned and writhed, simulating great pain.

Not one student stopped. They walked around him, stepped over him, and said different things to him. But nobody stooped over to help. What do you want to bet their academic work was flawless . . . and insightful . . . and handed in on time?

This incident always reminds me of a scripture that penetrates the surface of our intellectual concerns. “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (I John 3:16-17, NIV).

– Charles R. Swindoll, *Compassion*

We all are to have mercy towards others and at times the Holy Spirit gives us that supernatural ability to forgive and have compassion upon people. For example, the father or mother who forgives and shows mercy towards the person that killed their son or daughter! That is not natural but supernatural; it is the mercy of God being shown through them towards this person who does not deserve it. That is the gift of mercy, one way it is manifested!

You see, mercy is not a passive word, but it is an action word, and thus that action should be manifested in our life. It is as Henry Ward Beecher said, "No one thing does human life more need than a kind consideration of the faults of others. Every one sins; everyone needs forbearance. Our own imperfections should teach us to be merciful." The gift of mercy is truly needed in our lives; it truly needs to be manifested in the church!