

It is not that we deserve mercy or anyone deserves it, that is not what mercy is all about. 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.

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!

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.

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.

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! The gift of mercy!



1208 South 10th Street, Manitowoc, WI 54220
Phone: (920) 682-6163 * Fax: (920) 682-4605
Web Page: ccmanitowoc.org / E-mail: info@ccmanitowoc.org

What the Bible says about . . . Gifts of the Spirit Part 15

14. THE GIFT OF MERCY

Another gift of the Spirit, one that is very important, is the gift of mercy and Paul mentions this gift in Romans 12:3-8. 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 ELEEEO, (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.

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

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**

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, plentiful, 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**

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**

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**

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**

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! That means that God’s mercy towards us is inexhaustible, it is everlasting, it will never end! It extends farther than we could ever imagine!

7. **LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23**

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.

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**

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**

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**

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!

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 denarii, 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, not just 16 million dollars because in today’s economy 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 3rd, 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!