***The God of Mercy  
RO150-01***

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Today, we begin Romans 11:30-32, and our subject is "The God of Mercy."

**The future for the Jewish People**

At some point in the future, the apostle Paul has revealed to us that Jesus Christ will return to earth from heaven. At that point, the Jews who now reject Jesus Christ as their personal Messiah Savior will accept Him. At that time, a whole nation of born-again Jews will be formed at the Second Coming of Christ. God has promised at that time to take away unbelief from Israel as a whole. Today, the Jews are the enemies of the gospel of the grace of salvation through Jesus Christ. The antagonism of the Jews toward the gospel has opened the door, however, of salvation to the gentiles. The Jews are still very dear to God, because of the covenant which He made with Abraham. God's promise, therefore, to the Jewish nation will still someday be fulfilled. And as you have been with us in the study of this section of the book of Romans, I know that you become deeply aware of the fact that Paul has reiterated the fact that there is a great and glorious future for the Jewish people as a nation here on this earth when Jesus Christ comes to, Himself, being the politician of all politicians – the one who rules the nations of the world from Jerusalem under the guidance and assistance of the Jewish people.

Well, God's plan for the Jews, therefore, has indeed never been, and never will be, abandoned. Since God is immutable, His promises are trustworthy. The church, for that reason, we reiterate, is not the new Israel, so that the Jews, the true Israel, really do have a future with God. God is going to make Israel just as great, and just as holy, and just as powerful on this earth as God promised to Abraham that He would.

**The God of Mercy**

So, today, we look at the God of mercy. That may be a simple phrase to you now. It may be one with which you have no disagreement. I hope, before you walk out of these doors today, it will be a phrase with which you have become acquainted in a totally new way, and will be one that has an enormous depth of meaning, importance, and significance in your life – the god of mercy.

**Mercy to the Gentiles**

In verse 30, we have mercy to the gentiles. Paul says, "For, as you in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief." The word "for" is this Greek conjunction "gar." This is introducing an inference from what has just been said. It actually introduces a summary kind of restatement of what has already been said in Romans 11:11-12; in Romans 11:15; and, in Romans 11:28, all of which deal with the fact that the gentiles have been the beneficiaries of the unbelief of the Jews, and that the Jews in turn are going to be the beneficiaries of the grace and mercy which God has extended to the gentiles. The gentiles received salvation because of Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ.

"For as you." The word "as" is a significant word also. It looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's the Greek word "hosper." And it indicates an exact comparison. So, the idea is: "exactly as you." This is emphatic "you:" "Exactly as you (referring to the gentiles) in times past," referring to the past history of the gentile people. The word "past" is the Greek word "pote." And what this is pointing back to is an era in gentile history when the gentiles did have information about God, but they didn't esteem it. This is a constant problem that you and I face. We have great information about God. We don't just go to a Bible church. We go to an expository Bible doctrine church, and it's an infinitely greater step up from just going to a nice Bible church. You are taught the Word of God in depth, and on the authority of the Word of God, and on the authority of God Himself, and on the authority of the languages that He used.

This points back to the fact that we as a group (the gentiles) once knew something about God. We had it passed down to us from Adam. But then when you get to Romans 1, you have a detailed listing of what happened to the gentile world because they didn't think that the Bible was all that important. They didn't think that it was important that I had grown up with parents who taught me the Word of God, and who said this is important, and who took me to church, and sent me to clubs, and put me in a Christian school, and had me in Sunday school, and training union, and all that wealth of biblical orientation. They though, "Well, it was nice. But it isn't life and death." You're wrong. It was the first step of a god of mercy doing something for you that you needed to have done for you, and you perhaps were fortunate enough not to have ungodly, unsaved, unbiblical parents, so that you had a chance to have a leg up on everybody else in the human race by your sheer orientation to the Word of God.

**Be Grateful**

Now, when Paul says, "pote," he's talking about way back when – the gentiles really did know what it was all about. But the Bible says that they didn't esteem it. They weren't grateful for it. And it is a principle of life that anything you are not grateful for, you will lose. Anything you are not grateful for, you may count on losing it. And you better think that over, and apply it. I don't want to get bogged down here in all the ways I can see how that can apply. That person in your life that you take for granted, and are not grateful for, may be one that you lose – that little child that is such a precious thing to you, because you are not really grateful in a practicing way. And I don't mean grateful with your words. That's bunko. I mean grateful by the actions in the life that you relate to that individual. You may find you lose that precious opportunity. Grateful means preserving what you have. The gentiles, Romans 1 tells us, lost it all because they were not grateful. They were a bunch of ingrates for the information they had.

So, what do they do? Romans 1 tells that the gentiles, in times past, then began worshiping the things which God created instead of the Creator. They began worshiping animals. They began worshiping idols that they made. And the terrible thing about idols, the Bible tells us, is that behind every idol, there is a reality. And that reality is a demon. So, when someone says, "Well, every group historically has come up with its own religious system, and God is going to respect their attempt to reach Him, you're wrong, because those religious systems structured themselves upon idol gods of man's own creation. And when they worshiped those gods, they were not worshiping the real God. They were worshiping a demon. When Aaron put that golden calf together, and set that creature out in the middle of the compound for the people to worship, as Moses was up on Mount Sinai getting the Law of God, Aaron went so far as to say, "This creature, which we have molten from pure gold is your God. How do you like that? He even said, "This is Jehovah. This is your god." He was determined to dignify it that far. He didn't want them to quit worshiping Jehovah. He said, "Here it is.

God was enraged. And He sent Moses down to tell him that the people were worshiping an idol behind which we know was a demon force. And here is Aaron saying, “This is Jehovah your god. Worship it." And when they did, they worshiped the demon. What did they do? They did everything that demon worship goes to. They went into sexual immorality. They had a big sex orgy out there on the plane. They went into every drunken, wild debauchery. And God said, "Go back down, Moses. There's real trouble in the camp. You no sooner come up here to talk to Me than they have gone back into all of the depths of their sins." And when Moses walked in and saw what was taking place, he was so hopping mad, that he took those two tables of stone on which the Ten Commandments specifically were written, and he just smashed them to the ground, and broke the things into pieces, thus demonstrating, symbolically, what these people were in the process of doing.

In the past, the gentiles who knew the real God, began to worship gods of their own creation. They, of course, naturally passed into sexual immorality and perversions. So, you have, in Romans 1, the great condemnation of homosexuality, bestiality, and all the sexual immorality that exists outside of the marital relationship. These people lost their hold on divine viewpoint thinking. Therefore, we are told that they descended into an abysmal spiritual ignorance of black night wrapped around their mentalities.

In Acts 17:30, we read, "And the times of this ignorance God overlooked, but commanded all men everywhere now to repent." There was a time when God saw that spiritual ignorance. And He waited until He had a solution with His Son having paid for their problem. And now he says, "God cannot bypass that ignorance any longer. You are responsible. Now is the time to receive His solution through faith in His Son.

The gentiles thus were in total rebellion against God and His Word which had been handed down from Adam. And that's the background of what Paul means here is Romans 11:30, when he says, "As in times past, you gentiles have not believed God." Well, the word here really isn't "believe." It's this word "apeitheo." It refers to something that is the result of not believing God. What this word means is "to disobey." And in the New Testament, it is interesting to observe that God the Holy Spirit always uses this word to describe an attitude toward something which is true or right. Anytime the Holy Spirit uses "apeitheo," it's disbelieving something which is true, or disbelieving something that is right, or disbelieving something which is the mind of God.

So, this is what God says was the condition of the gentiles – disobedient to the information that God had given them. It was a personal choice. This disobedience to the Word of God, of course, had consequences. That's why the terrible diseases were rampant in the ancient world. That's why the conflicts existed. That's why there was so much suffering. And that's why death was ever present at an early age for the gentile population.

**Mercy**

So, Paul says, "Just as you gentiles in times past were disobedient to God, yet." And the word "yet" is really this conjunction "de," which means "but." It's a strong contrast here. He says, "But now (right now, at this point in time) things are different. You have obtained something, and what you've obtained is mercy ('eleeo')." "Mercy" needs a definition. If you don't get a definition, you won't understand what mercy means, and you will not appreciate all those verses in the Bible that talk about the mercy of God. Furthermore, you will not understand the mercy that God calls upon you as a human being to exercise. What do the politicians call upon us to do? They call upon us to exercise compassion because they're ignorant men. They do not understand what it is that God says that human beings should exercise, and therefore, have a proper emotional response to someone. Mercy has a deeply emotional factor in it.

**Pity toward Misery**

What mercy has to do with is the exercising of pity toward someone who is in misery. So, when you think of the word "mercy," you must be connect it with "pity toward misery." Now that puts a whole new dimension on the idea. It is my personal pity toward somebody's misery so that I move to give him some help. "Mercy" means "pity toward one who is in misery." Mercy is God's grace in action toward one who is hurting, and toward one who is helpless. Mercy is God's love extended to one who has a very great need. God has come to the relief and to the aid of the gentiles in their disobedient condition. Once the gentiles said, "We don't care about the Word of God:" they forgot about it; they did not appreciate it; and they lost it, they therefore descended into a human viewpoint lifestyles, and into all the sin that accompanies said. They gave full vent to the sin nature. Then came disease. Then came wars. Then came suffering. Then came death. Then came all the terrible things that the human race has to constantly struggle with. And they were a mess. And God said, "Those people need some pity." And God's pity went out to them in their misery.

"For as you gentiles, in times past, have disobeyed God. Yet now, at the present time, you have obtained mercy, and this comes as a result of their own belief." This is referring to the Jewish people, of all things, because of their failure "apeitheia:" the "apeitheia" of the Jews. This means their "disobedience." The Jews disobeyed God because they refused to accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah Savior. This resulted then in God's turning from the Jews to favor the gentiles. Previously, in this section, the apostle Paul has said that this is like an olive tree. An olive tree was viewed as a great prized tree in the ancient world, and was a source of great blessing in food supply and other things. And an olive tree was the place of blessing. The gentiles had no place in God's olive tree. The Jews were broken off because of their "apeitheia" (their disobedience) to God. And the gentiles have now found room for themselves in that tree of blessing.

So, the disobedience of the Jews resulted in God's mercy to the gentiles, who certainly had a desperate need. The spiritual blindness and the misery that that brought to the gentiles was now met by the light and hope of the mercy of God, extending the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ. God took pity on the gentiles who were spiritually dead in their sins. And because they were spiritually dead, they were unable to help themselves.

**Death is a Terminal Point**

I had a funeral this week for a former Berean, and I was again reminded that there is nothing so pitiful and helpless as death. Death is helplessness itself. And spiritual death is exactly as if you were there, watching and looking at a physical body lying in a casket, completely immobile, completely incapacitated, unable to do anything for itself. And this is how you must understand spiritual death. It means you're like a dead body. You're a corpse. You cannot do anything for yourself. That's a pitiful condition. And in the funeral I had to conduct, once that person was dead, there were all kinds of things they could have done with the individual. They could have thrown them in the garbage pile. They could have cut him up and put them down through the garbage disposal in the local kitchen. They could have preserved him, and used him for experimentation. They could have done anything with him. But the one thing is that the corpse could have never said, "Ow, that hurts. Don't do that. Hey, I don't want you to do this. Now here's what I want you to do." The corpse is helpless. Death is a terminal point. Being spiritually dead means that you need a lot of help.

Now, do you see where the mercy of God comes in? Here I am – born into the human race. I'm an infant. The minute I breathe, I'm dead. And there is nothing I can do about it. I can grow up to be the nicest person in the world, and I'm still spiritually dead. And I want to get to God, and I can't do anything. So, He comes in with mercy to overcome the natural disobedience that I have toward the laws of God. God's heart went out to the gentiles in their sinful manner of life; in the enslavement to the sin nature; and, in the human viewpoint arrogance that they had toward the authority of the Word of God.

The world is full of arrogant gentiles to this day. In all areas of life, there are men and women of influence who do not consider the importance of incorporating the principles of God's Word in what they are doing, and the influences they are having. God's mercy to these corrupt, doomed gentiles, however, is the result of the disobedience of Israel. Out of Israel's tragedy came grace for the gentiles. When the Lord Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world on the cross, the gentiles ignored Him, and the Jews rejected Him. But those individual Jews and gentiles who trusted in Christ, to them God's mercy gave eternal life in heaven. God's rich mercy toward the gentiles, Ephesians 2:4 tell us, is the direct expression of the love of God. It's because God loves you that He is willing to help you in your condition of misery. Against our enormous enslavement to sin, then, and against all of our moral guilt, God's love gave us His enormous mercy.

Verse 31 now deals with mercy to individual Jews. Verse 30 dealt with mercy to gentiles. Verse 31 talks about mercy to individual Jews. The first words are: "Even so." This looks like this. The Greek word is "houtos." "Houtos" is contrasted with the word "as" up in verse 30: "For as in times past, you disobeyed God. Even so, now, these also (referring to the Jews), at this point in time, had done (of all things) the same thing." What? "Not believed." That is not a good translation. What they have done is they have not obeyed. All of this is a matter of obedience. And, of course, if you do not believe the Word of God, that is disobedience. The word is "apeitheo," which means to disobey. They heard the gospel. They personally chose to disobey. The Jewish people today as a whole are disobedience to the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ, as the gentiles once were before them. The disobedience to God, on the part of the Jews, was not the result of their ignorance of the Word of God. It was the result of their insolence toward the Word of God. The Jews were told that Jesus Christ was the final Passover Lamb to redeem mankind. That was made very clear to the Jewish people. Matthew 1:21, John 1:29, and 1 Corinthians 5:7 indicate that Jesus Christ was God's final Lamb. He was the final Passover Lamb that would pass over the death angel so that they could have eternal life.

Even so, these Jewish people have now disobeyed God. For what purpose? "That." And he indicates to us what the purpose was. "That is this little word "hina," which indicates to us the purpose. Why? "So that through your mercy." And here we have again the same word, the mercy of God ("eleos"): "For the mercy of God." What is the mercy? It's the pity of God in their lost condition. The idea is "mercy shown to you." So, they are also (the Jewish people) have had mercy shown to them. Why? "So, that they also could obtain "eleeo." They also could obtain the mercy of God. "Mercy" means "to receive God's pity" in the Jews condemnation. This is the aorist tense (this word "eleeo", to obtain mercy), which means that at a point in time, they refused to recognize Jesus as Savior. And as the result of that, God came in and did something for them. It's passive voice. They didn't secure this. And it's subjunctive, which is a potential mood, which tells us that this is something possibly that could be done. Mercy received by the gentiles is to be the means of mercy unto the salvation of the Jews. The gospel came from the Jews to the gentiles. It is now to be proclaimed by the gentiles back to the Jews.

So, what Paul is saying in verse 31 is that the Jews will eventually admit that the gentiles who trusted in Jesus Christ were right, and that the gentiles really do have salvation, and therefore, these Jews will also trust in Him. The Jews are going to say, "Yes, the gentiles really did receive grace from God. They have come under His mercy. As a result of that, they too will then change their mind and come under the mercy of God. The mercy which is now enjoyed by we believing gentiles, is designed to attract the Jews to God's mercy. Disobedience is going to be overcome by the mercy of God.

Verse 32, then, gives us mercy in another direction, and that is to Israel as a nation – to the Jews as a whole. It's a totally different picture. Verse 32 begins: "For," indicating another introduction of a further explanation: "God." And this word "God" has the word "the" in the Greek, therefore indicating "*the* God," meaning God the Father: "Has concluded." This Greek word looks like this: "sugkleio." The word "sugkleio" means "to put a lot of things in an enclosure," or "to shut something into something from which they cannot escape."

In Luke 5:6, this word is used to describe fish which have been enclosed together in a net. God has made a judicial decision. This is one of the most dramatic, and one of the most significant verses in the Bible. Talk about the love of God! Here's where it shines out – in verse 32. The world is full of people who think that they are not all that bad. The world is full of people who think that somehow they can make it with God if they behave themselves, and if they try to put forth an effort. But God comes in, and He says, "I want to tell you something before you start talking to Me, and before you start imagining what you can do. I'm going to tell you something. You are all in a disaster area."

When a natural disaster hits some part of the country, the government declares that part a disaster area. What does that mean? That means that everybody enclosed in that particular disaster area now comes under an act of mercy. They have some misery. They've been hit by a tornado. Their properties have been torn up. People have been killed. Their livelihood has been destroyed. They're in misery. They're hurting. They need some help. In comes the mercy of the government, because that has been declared a disaster area. If you happen to be outside of that disaster area, you're outside that mercy, because you are not in the disaster area.

Now, God says, "I'm going to make this very simple. I'm going to make it easy for everybody to understand. I hereby, as the Creator judge of the universe, declare every Jew and gentile that ever takes a breath of life, a disobedient individual. And I thereby condemn you for an eternity in the lake of fire." That's what this word means. This is a very sobering word – "sugkleio:" to be all shut-up together unto unbelief. The Scripture says that it's really the word "disobedience." God has officially lumped Jews and gentiles in the same boat of disobedience to His standard of absolute righteousness. And God says, "All of you have come short of My glory." So, let's put that up front. Don't come to me talking about that: "I'm a lot better than the guy that lives down the street." Don't tell me about how you have great, merciful hopes and aspirations for human society, and that you want to help people in their need. All that is irrelevant. You are condemned. You're a dead person. A corpse cannot do anything. You cannot help yourself. You're spiritually dead. All, thus, rest are condemned beyond question to the lake of fire. They have no capacity to pay for their sins.

So, when we deal with people, somehow we have to get across to them that: "God has already passed a sentence upon you." Don't even discuss it. Don't try to think about the matter like there's some way out. The sentence has been passed. And God says, "You're guilty." You are guilty of moral evil." You were guilty of that by the fact you were born into the human race, and you have Adam's guilt upon you. You made it worse when you grew to an age of accountability by adding your own personal sins to Adam's guilt. Therefore, you have a double whammy, and there's no way out. You are in a prison that has no exit. There's no way you can dig yourself out of this hole. You are helpless. You cannot dig yourself out of this prison of moral guilt which God has pronounced.

So, people with good character normally resist the idea that they are totally depraved. And that's what bothers people: to tell them that they're totally depraved; and, to tell them that there is not one good thing about them. There is nothing they can do in God's eyes, and therefore, they're doomed to the lake of fire. They don't like that. All have a sin nature, so all are condemned. No one can save himself. No one is worthy of salvation, no matter how good he is. So, everybody is lost. This is what God is saying when it says here: "He has pronounced all of them in disobedience." That means that the vile, perverted sinner is condemned. That means the cultured, refined gentile sinner is condemned. That means that the religious, sincere Jewish sinner is condemned. It is really an expression of the love of God that He has left no doubt in anybody's minds concerning our qualifications for heaven. God says, "Your qualifications is zip. You have nothing. You have nothing to qualify you for eternal life.

So, anyone who reads this and then still thinks that he is not all that guilty is imposing an enormous deception on himself. Why has God put us in this kind of a prison? Why has God boxed us in like this so that we can't move in any direction? Why is it put us in a prison from which there is no way out? "That" is the Greek word "hina" again. God's purpose in placing the Jews and gentiles in this official condemnation is introduced by this word. I remind you that God does not act in an arbitrary manner, but He acts in a way that is in keeping with the demands of His Holiness. God's action of total condemnation is designed to free His love so that it can be expressed by saving sinners. What has He done? God has concluded everybody in this prison so that He could have mercy? And we're back to our verb again, "eleeo." "Eleeo" means to exercise pity. Here, God says, "I can exercise My pity on all sinners in their misery of condemnation. It's the aorist tense – at a point of providing a way out from death in hell. It's active voice. Only God can provide the way out. It's subjunctive (potential). This is a potential result for sinners. Not everybody is going to make it. Only God's mercy can now help those whom he has officially condemned to the lake of fire for their disobedience to His moral standard.

The mercy of God has relevance, of course, only to those who have been judged guilty of violating God's laws, and they are condemned to the lake of fire. After the sentence has been passed against you, that's when you need somebody to help you out. God has not lumped all as guilty of disobedience in order to send them to hell. But He has done this in order to qualify them for His mercy. It's the same principle that we have in Romans 3:9-12, where we have previously read: "What then? Are we better than they? No, in no way. For we have before proved, both Jews and Greeks (that is, gentiles) that they are under sin." This is the same principle. God is declaring everybody guilty: "As it is written, 'There is none righteous. No not one. There is none that understands. There is none that seek after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are together become profitable. There is none that does good – no, not one." That's the same idea. There is no help for these people except the help that God can give. They are in a miserable condition.

So, God's purpose is not to send people to the lake of fire. His purpose is to save them by the grace that can only come through the mediator, Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:3-6). God has shut up all sinners in a prison which has only one exit. And that's the person of Jesus Christ. There is no deity in man to enable him to make it on his own. When one accepts the fact that he is in prison, a prison for which there is no escape, that's when you're ready to have somebody come in and help you. As long as you think you can make it on your own, you will not be ready for the mercy of God.

**The Goal of God's Mercy**

I point out to you that the Scriptures here tell us that this mercy is upon all. The world is "pas." The mercy with which God has provided a way out is extended to all Jews and gentiles – every race of people. The worst of sinners is not excluded. It does not, however, imply universal salvation. Some people have taken that word, and said, "Aha, everybody is going to go to heaven eventually." It does not imply that. The Bible makes it clear that that is not true. All who accept God's mercy through Jesus Christ – they will go to heaven. Individual Jews and gentiles will be saved. The whole nation of Israel will be saved. All salvation, of course, depends on the elective choice of a sovereign God who answers to no one but Himself and His own holiness. The perversity of the sin nature shows itself in the constant disobedience of the moral code of God, which gives God the basis to condemn all in order to show mercy to all. The goal to God's mercy, then, helping people in their desperate need and their misery, here is to secure them a place in heaven and to escape the lake of fire.

We close with a brief review of a few points concerning the mercy of God – the taking of pity on human misery, and seeking to relieve it.

**The Two Blind Men**

In Matthew 9:29-30, and in Matthew 20:30-34, you may read about a group of men who came to Jesus Christ. Did they have a problem? They couldn't see. What a terrible misery to have eyes that cannot see, and to spend the day in total darkness, and the agony of making your way without sight. Notice the situation in Matthew 9:27-30: "And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us." Now what did they mean? They said, "We're in a terrible misery because we can't see:" "And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said unto them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said unto Him, 'Yea, Lord.' Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith, be it unto you.' And their eyes were opened, and Jesus strictly charged them, saying, 'See that no man know it.'" Now that, folks, is mercy in action – the misery of blind eyes. Matthew 20:33-34 gives another such example.

**The Demon-Possessed Child**

Then there is the misery that we have in Matthew 15:21, of a precious child of this mother. And the child is demon possessed. If you have a demonized child, you have some misery, and you need some big help: "And Jesus went from there, and departed unto the borders of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same borders, and cried into Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me.'" Now, do you understand what she was saying? "'I'm in terrible misery. I have a helpless condition. I need somebody who will be kindly disposed toward me, and give me some help. But it has to come from You. The government can't force me to do this. The government can't do it for me. It must come from You. Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon.' But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries after us.' But He answered and said, 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" We gentiles have an opening to get in too.

"Then she came and worships Him, saying, 'Lord, help me.'" Do you see what misery calls for? Help. Do you see what mercy can do? It can help: "And He answered and said, 'It is not right to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs. I have come to bring spiritual things to the Jewish people, not to the gentiles.' And she said, 'That's true, Lord. Yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the master's table.' Then Jesus answered, and said, 'O, woman, great is your faith. Be it unto you even as you will.' And her daughter was made well from that very hour." Jesus exercise mercy toward her.

**A Sick Child**

Then there is the misery of a sick child or a sick friend. You have such an example of Matthew 17:14-18. Here is a child who is sick, and sick again, because he is under the control of a demon: "And Jesus rebuked the demon, and he departed out of him, and the child was cured from that hour." And what the Father here called upon the Lord to exercise toward him was to have mercy. Verse 15: "Lord have mercy on my son. He is epileptic, and greatly vexed, for often he falls into the fire, and often into the water." That's a need. That's a mercy.

**A Terminal Disease**

I suppose there are a few miseries in life like a terminal disease. In Luke 17:11, you have an example of the concept of mercy facing such a situation. Here you have a group of men (10 of them) who are lepers. And we're told that they meet Jesus. Verse 13 says, "They lifted up their voices and said, 'Jesus, master, have mercy on us.'" What were they asking Him to do? They said, "Look at us. Look what's happened to my fingers. Look what's happened to my nose. It has fallen off. My ears are practically gone. The leprosy is gradually eating everything away. I'm in intense misery. And very soon I'm going to die. I'm so contagious I can't even live with other people. They have to throw scraps of food out to me so I can even survive. God, I'm in great misery. I need your pity." And the mercy of Jesus Christ came and said, "'Go show yourselves unto the priests.' And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleanses. The priest had to confirm that they were cleansed. And you remember that nine of them went on, responding to their old sin natures, "Hot dog, I'm healed," and never gave a second thought to Jesus Christ. But one man said, "Hey, wait a minute, I've got to go back and thank Him. I had misery. He had pity. He exercised mercy. And I'm well again." Jesus says, "Where are the other nine?" The man said, "I don't know. But I'm here, and I want to thank you.

**The Rich Man in Hades**

Certainly, there is no misery like the misery of one who suffers in Hades, and eventually in the lake of fire. In Luke 16:19-26, you read the story of the rich man and Lazarus. They're both now in Hades. The rich man lifts up his eyes, and he sees Abraham and Lazarus over on the good side of Hades. And verse 22 says, "The rich man cried, and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and said Lazarus, that he may get the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.'" Do you see what the man had? Intense suffering. Do you see what he needed? Somebody who would feel sorry for him; somebody whose heart would go out to him; and, somebody who had the capacity to exercise mercy to resolve this problem. But in this case, no one could. For Abraham says, "I'm sorry. You see this gulf that separates us. We can't go to you, and you can't come to us. You had your chance when you were alive. You knew the Word of God. You knew what you should do. You knew that you should trust in God to save you, and you did not. Now, there's no turning back." You know how the man wanted them to go back and do it for his brother. And he would not.

We lack time to pursue, but I will simply list for you a few verses that stress to us that the quality of mercy should characterize the people of God. I hope you will take the trouble to go and read these, because it will impress upon you that this is the quality that American society needs. We're not going to change the political system with our doctrinal viewpoint. We're not going to take anything over. The only influence we're going to have is as we, as believers, exercise the principles of the Word of God in our relationships to society, and primarily as we personally impose our mercy upon the misery of society. Government can't touch that. The liberals can't touch that. Nobody can cope with that. But the individual Christian, doing his thing, in his capacity for mercy, will outstrip all the human viewpoint agencies that are bringing more misery to people rather than less. The quality of mercy should characterize us.

In Luke 10:25-37, you find that Jesus commended the Good Samaritan because he was merciful.

Matthew 23:23-28 and James 3:17 say that we should have concern to help those who are needy. Don't just tell your brother when he's hungry, "Lord bless you, and I hope things work out for you. He's has a misery. He has a need. Exercise your pity. Exercise your mercy. Give him something to eat. Don't tell him, when he's cold that you hope you can get a job, and be able to get the money he needs to get a warmer coat. Give him what he needs, and help him see. That's what society needs. It's the mercy of Christians. It doesn't need the compassion of the idiots who run the government. The finest men are not to be found in the government. The finest men and the finest women are the men and women of God who understand the preciousness of human mercy.

There's something you should realize – that you have a vested interest in being merciful. It is not without reason that the Lord Jesus, in Matthew 5:7, in the famous Sermon on the Mount said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." The merciful are the ones who will obtain mercy. When you have your misery, and when you have your time of need, God says, "I'm going to check your records and see how merciful you were. And if you acted like that, you can count on me to be extra merciful to you.

**Mary's Magnificat**

In Luke 1:50, in this connection – this is called Mary's Magnificat. It is her song of praise when she discovers that she's going to be the Savior of the world. She knew that some Jewish woman, someplace along the line, would. The Scriptures had predicted that. In Luke 1:50, we read, "And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant, Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as he spoke to our fathers – to Abraham, and to his seed forever." Mary praises God because He is a God of mercy, Who doesn't deal with the haughty, and the arrogant, and even the rich. She says, "God just ignores them him and bypasses them." But the merciful and the humble – God says, "That's My kind of people. Those are the beautiful people on the face of the earth.

Matthew 9:10-13 tell us that God wants actions of mercy, and not just words and rituals. Believers are to exercise mercy to those who need it, and not demand their rights. Matthew 18:23-35 – mercy to the finks, as well as to the nice people.

There is another a principle we should remember, and that is that we are to give mercy cheerfully (Romans 12:8).

God's grace is what produces the mercy which results in his personal peace (1 Timothy 1: 12).

God's love produces great mercy toward believers (Ephesians 2:4).

The past mercies of God enable the Christians not to lose heart in hard times. Do you realize that? How many times have you run across hard times, and gotten all tied up with the problem you're having at that moment, instead of sitting down and saying, "Well, let's see how you He's treated me in the past?" 2 Corinthians 4:1: "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." The apostle Paul says, "I have a ministry." And he has told us about the problems he has in that ministry. But he says, "I don't get discouraged, because I remember the mercies He has given me in the past." That is what's going to carry us through. It is the mercy of God that makes the Christian a trustworthy person.

The Christian who is exercising mercy, furthermore, is going to be recognized as deserving special grace at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Timothy 1:16-18). That's good to know. The merciful Christian is going to get special treatment at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

And God Himself exercises His mercy sovereignly (Romans 9:14-18 and Romans 9:23).

However, there's one thing that I would be loath to close without bringing to your attention. Having said all this about exercising mercy, we may have opened a can of worms about people doing things that they think is a kind thing to do, which indeed they should not do, and which is not a kind thing to do. This is the problem with the compassionate crowd. They do not understand one guiding principle of exercising mercy, and thus exercising true compassion. Psalm 86:15 gives us that clue: "But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." You will repeatedly find mercy in the Scriptures connected with truth – again and again. You can exercise mercy only in truth. Therefore, you must have the principles of God's Word to guide you. Therefore, it is the principles of the world of god that can look at and say, "This person deserves mercy." This person has a legitimate need for mercy. This person is a qualified object of mercy. It is the truth of the Word of God that gives you perspective so that your compassion is not running amuck. Mercy based on false ground is not compassion. Mercy based on a lie leads to people exercising tyranny over the lives of other people.

2 John 3 reiterates that same concept: "Grace, be with you – mercy and peace from God." And I want you to notice that that order is the order in which God works. Grace comes first. Out of grace comes His mercy. And when His mercy to help with your misery is exercised, then comes peace out of it. That's always the order that it has to be in: "Grace be with you. Mercy and Peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Son in truth and in love." He will not exercise mercy except on the basis of truth. Then a person is really acting in love. Then you can exercise mercy on the basis of genuine love.

May God help us to appreciate the God of Mercy Who is helping us to make it every day. And me the God have mercy enable us to be imitators of this characteristic in the new way that we find in Him, and which we have found to our salvation and help in so many ways in the past.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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