

RTO™ School of Prayer
The Prayer of Mercy

Psalm 119:64 (NKJV)

“The earth, O Lord is full of Your mercy; Teach me Your statutes.”

Matthew 5:7 (NKJV)

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

By Dave Mozdin

These School of Prayer lessons have covered a variety of subjects concerning the believer's walk with Christ in a God honoring way, and each one, as you know, is connected to God's word, the Holy Bible. What we're going to do here is to pray about an attribute of God. An attribute is defined (Webster's New World Dictionary) as “a characteristic or quality of a person or thing”, a characteristic is defined as “a distinguishing trait, feature . . . peculiarity.”

God's attributes are many, diverse, multi-faceted, all of them operate at the same time, each one always in full proportion, and are perfect, just as He is perfect. (Matthew 5:48). Some of His best recognized attributes are His knowledge, supremacy, sovereignty, immutability, holiness, power, faithfulness, goodness, patience, grace, love, mercy, and wrath. Seeing and hearing of all these attributes can inspire a believer to a contemplation of all that God is, and that He alone is truly AWESOME! And worthy of ALL praise and worship! “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Romans 11:33.). This worship and praise may well inspire this writer to compose additional lessons on prayers about God's attributes.

For now, however, we will focus on God's mercy. Like any of His other attributes, God's word has much to say about His mercy, but before we go there, we'll define God's mercy. The Webster's Dictionary defines mercy as "A refraining from harming and punishing offenders . . .", "Kindness in excess of what may be expected by fairness." Vine's Bible Dictionary defines mercy as ". . . the outward manifestation of pity; it assumes need on the part of him who receives it." A common definition used by believers is "not getting from God what we deserve." Our English word "mercy" as used in the Bible is derived from the Hebrew word "hesed". Other English synonyms for mercy as translated in the Bible include lovingkindness, kindness, steadfast love, and love.

While these are all good definitions of mercy, when examined through the lens of Scripture, we see that there is SO much more to mercy than what is described in those definitions, but before we go into detail on that, we need to clear up some areas of possible confusion concerning mercy, and that is, God's mercy relative to God's grace. Some people believe they are synonymous with each other, but there are differences. Grace is most known as God's unmerited favor. Mercy springs from grace, it is God's grace translated into action. In his book, *The Attributes of God*, theologian Arthur W. Pink has written, "The first issue.... His inclination to relieve the misery and supply the needs of fallen creatures, such as we are. The key distinction from grace is "supply the needs", more on that later.

For an example, look at Noah's situation in Genesis 6 (NKJV). God had decided to destroy the earth and all the living beings in it because "the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5), and "So the LORD said, 'I will

destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.’ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” (vv.7-8). Although he was described as a just/righteous (right with God) man who walked with God (Genesis 6:9), this description of him occurs in the Bible *after* the statement that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord, that is, he gained God’s unmerited favor. Where does mercy fit in here? God supplies Noah’s need as a result from giving him grace. “Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch.” And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which *is* the breath of life; everything that *is* on the earth shall die. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. (Genesis 6:14, 17-18). God supplies Noah’s and his family’s needs (mercy) by not only giving him the instruction and the resources to do so, but also God’s covenant agreement for their survival. As sinners they too would deserve death, but God’s grace negated that punishment, and God’s mercy supplied their needs that helped to spare them.

To arrive at our prayer of mercy, we’ll examine God’s attribute of mercy from three perspectives.

A.) How We See Mercy. As previously noted, a popular definition among believers, as well as unbelievers, is that mercy is not getting what we deserve. You may recall instances where a convicted person, just prior to sentencing, will plead to the judge for mercy. If the judge reduces the sentence, then it is said that the judge had mercy on the guilty offender. As

the judge answers the plea, has mercy, and reduces or commutes the sentence, indeed the offender doesn't receive what he or she truly deserves.

Examples of God's mercy in this way abound in the Bible. One is that of King David, after his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, the subsequent murder of her husband Uriah and the resulting cover up. (2 Samuel 11-12). The penalty for both adultery and murder was physical death (Leviticus 20:10, 24:17), and both David and Bathsheba, while not exempt from punishment, were spared the death penalty. David pleaded for mercy in Psalm 51:1, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness:", and God granted it to him.

A New Testament example is the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, Matthew 18:23-27. In answering Peter's question as to how often we ought to forgive one another, Jesus tells this story about a servant who owed his master an astronomical amount of money. With no humanly possible way to repay this massive debt, the ". . . master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made." (v. 25). In response, "²⁶The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with (have mercy on) me, and I will pay you all.' ²⁷Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, (had mercy) released him, and forgave him the debt." Jesus goes on to conclude the parable by telling how the man who received great mercy turned around and denied this same mercy to a man who owed him a small sum, and that the one who denied such mercy would suffer severe

punishment from God the Father. This points out an important element of understanding mercy which we will soon cover.

B.) How God Sees Mercy. As was also previously mentioned, there is so much more to mercy than simply the fact that it is God not giving us what we truly deserve. Rather than focus on what is *not* there, God's focus is on what *is* there.

Drawing more upon the writings of Arthur W. Pink (quoted earlier), we see three distinctives of God's mercy. They are:

- 1.) "First, there is a *general* mercy of God, which is extended not only to all men, believers, and unbelievers alike, but also to the entire creation: 'His tender mercies are over all His works'" Psalm 145:9 (NKJV). In other words, whatever He created, man, woman, animal, vegetable, mineral, earth, wind, fire, He supplies whatever it takes to make it function.
- 2.) "Secondly, there is a *special* mercy of God, which is exercised toward the children of men, helping . . . them, notwithstanding their sins." "For He makes the sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:45).
- 3.) "Thirdly, there is a *sovereign* mercy reserved for the heirs of salvation (Exodus 33:19), which is which is communicated to them in a covenant way, through the Mediator (who is Jesus Christ His Son). "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," (1 Timothy 2:5).

Summarizing additional thoughts from Pink: "The mercies of God toward unbelievers are temporal, extended to them in this life only. There will be no mercy extended to them beyond the grave." As an example, in Jesus'

parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16), the rich man is an unbeliever who dies and goes to Hades (hell), and ²³ “being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ ²⁵But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’”(vv.23-26). God’s mercy was extended to him only during his lifetime on earth.

“It is pure sovereign grace which alone determines the exercise of Divine mercy. ‘For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy’”. (Romans 9:15). And “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us”. (Titus 3:5).

We have mentioned several times already that a major part of God’s mercy consists of His supplying our needs. After citing these verses from Romans 9 and Titus 3, this gives us pause to consider God’s mercy supplying our greatest need, that is, the need to be in right relationship to Him through Jesus Christ His Son. As we have seen, if we do not repent and embrace Christ by faith for the forgiveness of our sins, we run the great risk of God’s mercy being applied to us only during our time on earth and will have all mercy denied as we suffer in hell in anguish and torment forever. If you do say “Yes” to Christ and be saved by His love and grace, you will enjoy His

tender mercies forever in heaven, and God will supply your every need, now and forever! If you have not made a decision for Christ, do it now! Your eternal destiny hangs in the balance.

This leads up to the contemplation of God's spiritual mercies to those who are His, saved believers. "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him". (Psalm 103:11). " ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),". (Ephesians 2:4-5).

"³Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,". (1 Peter 1:3-4). How could we not rejoice in hope with all this God blessed mercy for us?!?! This in turn leads us to the third perspective of God's mercy that we will examine:

C.) How God Helps Us to see Mercy as He Sees It. Here is where the key verses cited at the beginning of the lesson come into play. "The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy; Teach me Your statutes." (Psalm 119:64 NKJV). At first glance, one may wonder "How does the second line of this verse relate to the first?" Matthew Henry's commentary on this verse says "A gracious heart will fetch an argument from any thing to enforce a petition for divine teaching. Surely He that will not let His birds be unfed

will not let His children be untaught.” It is not unreasonable to believe that since the psalmist has declared that the earth is full of God’s mercy, could he not draw upon that mercy to satisfy his desire to learn more of God’s statutes, also known as precepts or commandments?

The answer, of course, is Yes! God, through His word, the Bible, will teach us everything we would want to know (John 14:26) about His mercy, through careful loving persistent reading, studying, and meditating upon His word. How long will that take? Hopefully for the rest of our lives, both here on earth and in heaven throughout eternity! Drawing from God’s word, with some additional guidance from Pastor Rex Andrews’ book “What the Bible Teaches About Mercy”, we learn: 1.) God’s mercy is enduring, “For His mercy endures forever.” Psalm 133, declared at the end of each of this psalm’s 26 verses! 2.) God’s mercy is everlasting, Isaiah 54:8, “with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you’, says the Lord, your Redeemer.” 3.) God’s mercy is great, 1 Kings 3:6, “You have shown great mercy to Your servant . . .” 4.) God’s mercy is abundant, Psalm 86:5, “abundant in mercy to all those who call upon you.” 5.) God’s mercy is tender, Luke 1:78, “Through the tender mercy of our God, from which the Dayspring on high has visited us.” 6.) God’s mercy is on those who fear Him, Psalm 103:17, “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him”.

As we go through God’s word with His mercy specifically in mind, we see how the Bible (besides the earth) is full of His mercy. We’ve already seen mercy in the psalms, having quoted it in four psalms. The following section will present just a sampling of the presence of God’s mercy throughout His

word. You are encouraged to access a concordance, you can find one online free of charge, and do your own word study on the word mercy.

We see mercy in the Old Testament in God giving the Law to Moses, (Exodus 34:5-7)

⁵Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. ⁶And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,'" (Concerning these verses, James Montgomery Boice writes: "These words unfold the meaning of 'the name' of God, expressed in His mercy to all who confess their sin and come to Him."). Numbers 14:19, "Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." Deuteronomy 4:31, "(for the LORD your God *is* a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them." Deut. 7:12, "Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers."

References to God's mercy are shown in Proverbs: "Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart". (Proverbs 3:3). "In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the fear of the LORD *one* departs from evil." (Proverbs 16:6).

Mercy from the prophets: (Isaiah 16:5) "In mercy the throne will be established; And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, Judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness." (A reference to Christ).

Jeremiah 9:24: "But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I *am* the LORD, exercising lovingkindness (mercy), judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD."

Daniel 9:18: "O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies."

Hosea 6:6: "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." (Quoted by Christ in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7).

Micah 6:8: "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?"

Mercy in the New Testament: Luke 1:54: "He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of *His* mercy,"

Romans 12:1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service."

2 Corinthians 4:1: "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart."

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

Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

Mercy as taught by Jesus Christ: Some of the most concise, relevant, and powerful biblical teaching about mercy comes from our Lord and Savior Himself, who is mercy personified. After all, He gave His very life to supply our greatest need, to be rightly reconciled to God! Alleluia!

Mercy is a critical element in our Lord's teachings. In Matthew 9:13, Christ says, "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And Matthew 12:7, "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless." In both cases He was quoting Hosea 6:6, which was a verse that was cited from mercy in the prophets.

Christ mentions mercy in the Parable of the Ten Lepers. Luke 17:12-14:
¹²"Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. ¹³And they lifted up *their* voices and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' ¹⁴So when He saw *them*, He said to them, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed." Leprosy was a disease that could spread very easily and quickly and destroyed the body of the one who had it. Because of this, they were treated as social outcasts and had to live away from loved ones in their

own location. They had a great need for physical healing, cried out to Jesus for mercy, He supplied their need and healed them.

Christ mentions mercy in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. Luke 18:13-14: "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified". The tax collector's great need was forgiveness of his sins, he cried out to God to be merciful, God heard, forgave him, and Christ Himself declared the man justified before God.

These two parables are used to show that God supplies both our physical and spiritual needs, and if you do an extensive study of God's mercy in the Bible, you will see that God supplies ALL our needs! Remember Psalm 145:9, "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." Based on these findings, Pastor Rex Andrews has written a good definition of mercy that reflects this truth and is practical to note: "Mercy is God's supply system for every need everywhere."

One of the most important elements about which Christ taught on mercy pertained to receiving God's mercy then giving mercy to others. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37, Jesus is tested by a lawyer, a doctor of the law, and the discussion shifts to what is the definition of "neighbor". He goes on to tell the story of a man who is traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, is robbed and severely beaten. A priest and a Levite who were also travelling, saw him and "passed by on the other side". A Samaritan, an outsider in Jewish society, sees the awful plight of this

traveler, stops, and tends to his wounds, takes him to an inn and pays the innkeeper to take care of him, promising to pay any additional costs. Christ concludes by asking the lawyer ³⁶“So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves? ³⁷” And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”

Pastor Andrews expands upon this wonderfully with his additional definition of mercy: “Mercy is that kindness, compassion, and tenderness which is a passion to suffer with, or participate in, another’s ills or evils in order to relieve, heal and restore.” Just as God through Christ and the Holy Spirit has done for us. And isn’t that what we do here in this prison ministry?

The final teaching on mercy from Christ that will be cited here is from Matthew 5:7, one of our two key verses for this lesson. “Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.” This is from the Sermon on the Mount at the beginning of Christ’s teaching in the gospel according to Matthew. This is more fully illustrated in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, as we have just seen. The reverse of Matthew 5:7 is also true. This is written in James 2:13, “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.” Remember the rich man in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus? He showed no mercy to Lazarus in their lifetimes and received no mercy at the judgment at his death.

In drawing all this together, the title of this lesson is The Prayer of Mercy. Based on what we’ve learned here, what could be our prayer of mercy?

We could go with a very short prayer, as we did in the lesson on “A Short and Perfect Prayer for Peace”, which was “Come Lord Jesus!” Here we could just pray “Lord have mercy”, or “Christ have mercy”.

We could borrow the prayer that Pastor Andrews prayed. “O Lord, Flood (Name) with fulfilling mercies. All his/her need supply fully. The mercy You’ve done to me, do to Him/her, yet in still further measure.” This mercy prayer is good for those situations when you have been hurt by someone else’s sin against you. It’s a reminder that God has given you much mercy, and perhaps God’s mercy will help that person to repent from that sin. It’s also good to prevent you from rushing to condemning judgment, even though your hurt is real. Remember James 2:13, “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.” Also remember the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:23-27), who was forgiven/obtained much mercy from God, then refused forgiveness/mercy to one who had committed a less grievous offense against him. Upon discovering this, his Master had no mercy on him, releasing him to the jailer until he repays all his massive debt.

And, as always, we can pray “in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication”, Ephesians 6:18, praying from the heart according to what you have learned about mercy from God’s word. You can pray some verses just as they are written, like Psalm 117, which is in the very center of the Bible, ¹“Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! ²For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD *endures* forever. Praise the Lord!” You can pray one of the key verses in this lesson, Psalm 119:64, “The earth O Lord, is full of Your mercy, teach me Your statutes.”

You can pray Psalm 36:5, “Your mercy, O LORD is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.”

You can pray knowing that His abundant mercy supplies our *every* need, especially our greatest need, that being for a Savior, His only begotten Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You can pray knowing that “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matthew 5:8).

You can pray knowing “*Through* the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. *They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*” (Lamentations 3:22-23). Amen. *Alelluia!*

For a copy of a transcript or questions, please email dmozdin.dfp@gmail.com

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