

## **Mercy:** *The Antidote for the Hardened Heart*

### **I. THE INVITATION TO GO AND LEARN ABOUT MERCY**

***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. (Matt. 9:13)***

- A. When seen clearly, our hearts are absolutely defenseless against God's undeserved mercy, and His unreserved kindness. The more we understand the severity of our sinful condition and why we deserve Hell, the more the love of Christ can be grasped as something intensely real and personal. It wasn't when we were at our best that He died for us, but "while we were still sinners" (Rom. 5:8). The greatest sign and wonder we can ever witness is not the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead or even fire falling from heaven, but the gospel's power to transform the human heart in love.

***Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (Rom. 2:4)***

- B. The on-ramp to true repentance is not fear of punishment, but faith in His mercy, the riches of His goodness. It is our continual encounter with God's mercy that changes us and causes us to grow in love and meekness.
- C. We desperately need the revelation that God loves to give mercy. We MUST GO and LEARN what this means. It doesn't happen overnight, but it takes the daily resolve to "come boldly to His throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

### **II. EXTRAVAGGANT MERCY PRODUCES EXTRAVAGGANT LOVE (LK. 7:36-50)**

- A. Our capacity to love God is directly related to the extent we receive His mercy. The more faith we have in God's mercy, the more power we will have to resist sin and choose Him.
- B. Behind every behavior is a belief system. Many believers consistently struggle with the same sin issues because they haven't changed the way they think (Rom. 12:1-2). Many are going the right direction with the wrong thinking.

- C. They still don't believe that God has forgiven them, and their hearts are always heavy with shame and condemnation. Then they try so hard to resolve this out of religious zeal only to face more bitterness and frustration.
- D. All throughout Scripture, we are given pictures of God's mighty hand and outstretched arm of mercy. (Ex. 6:1,6; 13:9; Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 1 Kgs. 8:42; 2 Kgs. 17:36; 2 Chr. 6:32; Neh. 1:10; Jer. 32:21)

***With a mighty hand and outstretched arm; His love endures forever. (Ps. 136:12)***

- E. Think about Hosea's Mercy Assignment

***Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. (Micah 7:18)***

- F. Mercy is not God winking at our compromise. It is God exposing our compromise that we might turn back to Him. It should never give us confidence to be casual about sin. God is equally merciful, holy, and just. God gives mercy to give His people a new beginning so that they would fear God.

***But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. (Ps. 130:4)***

### **III. BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL (MATT. 5:7)**

- A. One of the most effective ways to go and learn mercy is to look for opportunities to demonstrate it. As we face the tensions of learning to give mercy to those who mistreat us, we will begin to understand and experience (obtain) more of His mercy. This works both ways.

***Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. (Matt. 5:7)***

- B. There are various ways to express mercy. We are called to be tender towards those who mistreat us and complain against us, who annoy us, who are different, who are less committed to God than we are, who make mistakes, who stumble in scandalous sins, and especially those who suffer and are in great need due to poverty, sickness, oppression, persecution, or other trials. We are to help people in all these categories to feel accepted and valued by both God and His people.

***Put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. (Col. 3:12-13)***

- C. The measure of our gratitude is the measure of our understanding of the mercy that we received. The measure of our anger is the measure of our lack of understanding of the mercy we received.