



Put on Mercy

April 16-22, 2023

MAIN POINT

Because God is merciful to us, we are to extend mercy to others.

INTRODUCTION

What picture comes to mind when you hear the word “mercy”?

Describe one occasion when someone showed mercy to you. What does it feel like to be the recipient of mercy?

Mercy is a characteristic and action that comes from the very nature of God. On the human level it is best described as a consideration of the condition and needs of others. Mercy is an action taken by the strong toward the weak, the rich toward the poor, the insider toward the outsider, those who have toward those who have not. As we will see in today’s discussion, we are to show mercy to others because of the great mercy of God.

UNDERSTANDING

READ [PSALM 32](#).

What is the source of blessedness or happiness in this psalm?

**God freely forgives those who trust Him. This is His mercy in action.
In what sense have we all been shown mercy and forgiveness from God?**

Describe one specific occasion when you have experienced the mercy of God.

Mercy as given by God is the foundation of forgiveness. It is His faithfulness and steadfast love. Throughout Scripture, God is not seen as displaying an emotion called mercy but as taking merciful action. He showed His mercy to all of us when He offered His Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice for our sins. Because of that action, God offers us salvation and forgives us of our sins when we confess them to Him, as David did in Psalm 32.

Paul the apostle also reflected on the great mercy of God in [Ephesians 2:1-10](#), a passage that shows us not only the greatness of God’s mercy, but also His call on His followers to extend that mercy to those around them.

READ [EPHESIANS 2:1-3](#).

What attributes of humanity do you see in this passage?

What does this passage reveal about why we need salvation and the consequences of not receiving it?

Paul reached a dismaying conclusion about the depth of sin. In our sinful nature, none of us deserve God’s mercy and love. We are born with a bent toward sin. Without God’s grace, all human beings are spiritually helpless and hopeless.

How does it feel to talk about humans in the terms that Paul used—dead, following desires and cravings, disobedient? Why is it good to use those terms to talk about our nature?

It can be hard to talk about ourselves as fallen and wicked. It can feel excessively negative, and it certainly doesn't build our self-esteem. However, by using these terms to understand ourselves better, we gain a greater understanding of the mercy and grace of God.

READ [EPHESIANS 2:4-7](#).

After reading verses 1-3, how do you feel when you read the words “But . . . God” in verse 4? What would the world be like without those words?

With the wonderful words “But . . . God” Paul turned from diagnosing our spiritual death to describing our new life in Christ. He began by piling up three overlapping terms that describe the divine basis for our salvation. We owe everything to God's character.

What attributes of God do you see in this passage?

Why does Paul highlight the mercy of God as one of those attributes?

How does God's plan and providence for fallen human nature show His mercy?

God's mercy is His tenderhearted, loving compassion toward the needy. God's grace is displayed through showing undeserved favor toward all who have sinned against Him. Mercy from God is never deserved and is always generated by His character and not man's.

READ [EPHESIANS 2:8-10](#).

Salvation is not just from something, it is unto something as well. Unto what has God saved you? What are some good works God has saved you to do?

Why should mercy always be involved in those good works?

If we do not express mercy to others, what might that indicate about our own relationship with God?

Mercy is more than mere emotion; it is a deep character trait born from the mercy God has shown us. Whenever we serve others, we can express the same tenderhearted compassion that God has expressed to us. Conversely, if we find ourselves unable to extend this mercy, perhaps we need to reconnect with just how much mercy God has already shown us.

APPLICATION

Read [Matthew 5:7](#). What does Jesus expect of His followers?

How is God's mercy different from our mercy?

What are some opportunities you have to show mercy on a weekly basis?

PRAYER

Close your time in prayer, praising God for His mercy. Thank Him for this tenderhearted compassion and pray that you would be a vessel this week for the extension of that mercy. Pray that our church would consistently demonstrate the mercy of God to our community.

COMMENTARY

PSALM 32:1-11

Bible interpreters classify the psalms in different categories according to their subject matter and focus. Psalm 32 is a penitential psalm. In penitential psalms, the writer often cries out to God because of his sin and asks the Lord's forgiveness. Or the writer experiences and describes the joy of God's forgiveness after confessing his sin to Him. Psalm 32 is the latter type of penitential psalm.

Some Bible interpreters consider Psalm 32 the follow-up psalm to [Psalm 51](#). They believe David wrote Psalm 32 after he experienced the joy of God's forgiveness. The Hebrew word maskil in the psalm heading probably denotes some kind of contemplative or reflective psalm.

King David began his psalm with a beatitude expressing the joy of God's forgiveness. The expression how happy is also could be translated "o, the happiness of" and further stresses David's joy. David used several words to describe his failure to meet God's holy standard. These words also may describe our own sinful situations. Transgression denotes a defiant rebellion against God's standard—one in which sinners deliberately cross the line God has established. (see this lesson's word study on "transgression.") Sin denotes falling short, missing the target, missing God's righteous standard. David used the word covered to mean "covered once and for all," that is, God would never uncover David's sin again.

Believers today need to understand this important truth. Once God forgives our sin, He forgives our sin—period. God's Word assures us we are forgiven when we confess our sin ([1 John 1:9](#)).

The Hebrew word translated sin in verse 2 is a different Hebrew word that has as its basic meaning "crookedness." David described the joy of the one who no longer had sin charged to his account. God had straightened out his life. once he had experienced God's forgiveness, no deceit could be found in his spirit. the joy of God's forgiveness also had brought to David an inner change of attitude.

Joy is a natural by-product of God's forgiveness. Forgiveness should also help us grow in our desire to serve Him. our human nature encourages us to pursue that which will make us happy, but happiness can be elusive and temporary. Real happiness does not come from fleeting circumstances, but from knowing God and the joy of His forgiveness.

David described the terrible battle that occurred within his soul as he kept silent about his sin. He felt as if his bones became brittle and ready to snap due to the internal anguish of his groaning all day long. Outwardly, David tried to act as if nothing was wrong, but inwardly he knew his guilt. He also probably sensed that others around him knew of his sin. Almost certainly those within David's "inner circle" of leaders had figured it out. David's inward groaning of spirit finally became too much for him to bear, and he experienced God's forgiveness when he confessed his sin. David described how day and night he struggled inwardly. He testified how God's hand was heavy on him, eventually bringing David to a point where he knew he could not go on without confessing his sin.

Believers often experience such inner pangs of conscience when their sin separates them from God. We feel like the weight of the world is on our shoulders, but that weight may well be the loving hand of a patient God gently nudging us to confession and repentance.

The Hebrew word translated drained also can mean “overturned” and aptly describes the churning of David’s soul within him. The summer’s heat could be quite oppressive; temperatures might well reach 100 degrees or more in the wilderness of Judah and the Jordan Valley. Typically, no rain falls between May and September in Israel, so no relief is readily available from the heat. David’s sin sapped his spirit as the summer sun sapped his strength.

Adults may experience times when they have asked for God’s forgiveness, yet still feel guilty. God is eager to forgive, yet we may sometimes have difficulty forgiving ourselves, which leads to a false sense of guilt. God does not want us to live in this state, but to recognize that He has extended to us His forgiveness in Jesus Christ when we ask Him to forgive us. [Romans 6](#) assures us that Jesus died to break sin’s power in our lives, and [Romans 8](#) reminds us we have no condemnation if we stand in Christ by faith ([6:1-4,12-14](#); [8:1-4](#)).

The turning point came in David’s life when he acknowledged his sin against the Lord. He literally made known to God a sin God already knew, but David needed to confess it to experience the true joy of God’s forgiveness.

The Hebrew word translated conceal also means “covered” and is the same Hebrew word used in verse 1. David might try to cover his sin, but only God could permanently cover it and deal with it. The words I said reflect the decision David made. He would confess his transgressions to the Lord. For David and for us, confession is more than admitting our sin. It involves seeing sin as God sees it and turning from it in repentance.

The Bible asserts that all of us fall short of God’s holy standard ([Romans 3:23](#)). Agreeing with God about our sin problem is the first step to cleansing. Even Christian’s sin and need God’s forgiveness on a daily basis to restore them to fellowship with Him. The Bible also affirms the certainty of God’s forgiveness if we confess our sins ([1 John 1:9](#)).

In light of the great truth of God’s forgiveness for all who repent and confess their sin, David called on people everywhere to pray and seek God’s face. The words at a time that you may be found remind us of [Isaiah 55:6](#), where Isaiah encouraged the people to seek God’s face right then, while a relationship with Him was present in their minds. In the new testament, Paul encouraged people to call on God now, for now is the acceptable time of salvation ([2 Corinthians 6:1-2](#)). We should not put off establishing a relationship with Jesus Christ by faith, and we should not put off experiencing the joy of God’s forgiveness through confession.

The mention of great floodwaters is interesting and somewhat unexpected since Jerusalem, located on high ground, would not likely experience such a catastrophe. However, floods are sometimes known in the wilderness and desert canyons of Judah, when the hard rocky ground cannot quickly absorb hard rains and gently flowing channels quickly become rushing tides. David probably intended this expression in a figurative sense to describe challenging adversities, as did the prophet Isaiah ([Isaiah 43:2](#)). The prophet Nahum used similar imagery to describe God’s sweeping judgment ([Nahum 1:8](#)), but judgment is not intended in our focal passage.

God was David’s hiding place, his place of refuge. David knew the peace and joy of God’s

forgiveness as he experienced quiet solitude with his Lord. The Hebrew words translated protect and trouble sound very much alike and would have provided.

Thus far in the psalm, David had described his own experience of confession and forgiveness. The Lord God now responded to David in verses 8-9 with the promise of His instruction and guidance. He would help David grow through the experience. The Hebrew word translated instruct carries the sense of imparting wisdom and insight. It is related to the word maskil in the psalm's heading. The word show also could be translated "teach" or "instruct" and is related to the Hebrew word torah, which is usually translated "instruction," "teaching," or sometimes "law." God's eye watched over David for good; the imagery suggests God's personal, intimate involvement in the relationship. The words give counsel describe the Lord's role as David's trusted counselor and advisor. The Lord had a perspective on David's life that David could never have, just as the Lord sees our lives from a perspective we cannot have. Faithful obedience and trust should mark our lives when we follow Christ, even when we do not fully understand what He is doing.

David began speaking again in verse 10. He acknowledged that many pains come to the wicked. Evildoers do not have the benefits of a relationship with the Lord, so they go through life totally without Him. Many struggle to make sense of life, while others have no time for the things of God. They have no foundation for life, and they have no guide for life. In contrast, David acknowledged that God's faithful love surrounds those who trust Him. God's love provides His children a foundation on which they can build their lives. In fact, God Himself builds on His foundation as He guides them.

David closed his psalm by encouraging all righteous ones and upright in heart everywhere to rejoice and shout for joy. God not only cleanses them of their sin, but He also empowers them to become better people. He sets them free to embrace life in all its fullness as they experience the joy of His forgiveness.