

GOD, THE MERCIFUL KING

+ SESSION IN A SENTENCE:

The sinner deserves God's punishment, but God has extended mercy.

+ BACKGROUND PASSAGES:

1 Kings 9:1-9; 11:14-40; Titus 3

+ SETTING:

When Solomon finished building the temple of the Lord and his royal palace, he must have patted himself on the back. God then appeared to him and explained what would happen if he followed God like his father, David, did and what would happen if he didn't. Solomon decided not to listen to the Lord's warning. And in not listening, he failed miserably in the eyes of the Lord, so judgment was coming. Solomon was supposed to be the wisest man in the world, yet one misstep led to another. Oh, but for the mercy of God extended to us! Oh, but for His mighty plan and redeeming love to save us from our missteps and failures! Oh, but for the true King who leads us well as an example and a Savior for us!

DAY 1

READ:

1 Kings 9:1-9

FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Kings 9:4-9

NOTES

Most parents don't enjoy disciplining their children. They shouldn't be excited by it either. However, once the boundaries are crossed and the rules are broken, it is the responsibility of loving parents to correct and discipline their children. Training through discipline is part of what is needed to grow and flourish as human beings. Without the correction of our parents the cultural chaos told in the novel *The Lord of Flies* would come true. Everyone would do what is right in their own eyes.

So how should the Creator of all things respond to His creatures who defy and disobey His Word? Would it make any sense if God were not also the judge to rightly punish and discipline us for our flagrant sin? Shouldn't the Lord discipline His children so they might walk in integrity and holiness as He is holy (Heb. 12:5-6)? The Lord's discipline on His children, as well as the Lord's punishment on the wicked, reveals His holiness and love to us and to the world. God is holy and desires us to be holy, knowing that our holiness adds to our good. In His love, He disciplines us and punishes the wicked to reveal His character as a holy, just, and good God that we might not fall into deeper sin and more devastating consequences, hoping as well that it would lead us to repentance and back to Him.

As God spoke to Solomon, He laid out before the king a course of action for the rest of his life. While he walked in obedience and devotion to the Lord, he would enjoy the glorious benefits and blessings of God's promises. But when he turned from the Lord, he would reap the discipline and heavy hand of the Lord upon him and the land. If Solomon obeyed, the promises were great. But the reality was that Solomon disobeyed, and the punishment was severe. When we see and experience the discipline of God, we would be wise to consider and repent of our sin lest we become like Solomon, missing out on the blessings of God.

**How do you respond to God's judgment and discipline?
Where and how might He be correcting you today?**

DAY 2

READ:

Proverbs 28

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Proverbs 28:13

NOTES

We found my daughter hiding in the shower. After receiving a gift of delicious Amish Friendship Bread from a dear friend, my wife was distraught that the loaf had suddenly vanished. Consumed with desire, my two-year-old daughter had swiped the warm bread and ran off to hide her yeasty gluttony. Had it not been for the trail of crumbs traveling down the hallway into the bathroom shower, we may never have discovered her transgression.

It's easy to be merciful to a cute two-year-old, but her actions revealed something innate to our human nature: it's our disposition to hide our sin. Just like our first parents who hid themselves from God's presence after their rebellious actions (Gen. 3:7-8), so are we quick to hide our sins and ourselves from God. We know we are guilty, we feel the shame of our sin, and perhaps we've come to believe that God's retribution will be more than we can handle. As the proverb says, anyone who hides his sins won't prosper (Prov. 28:13a). We can't hide from God.

Yet the true nature of God should cause us not to run and hide our sin. Instead, we should go running to Him with our sin when we sin. The contrasting second line of the proverb is equally true and wonderfully beautiful in saying that whoever confesses their sin and lets go of it will receive mercy (Prov. 28:13b). Here an invitation is set before us from the very heart and nature of God. He invites us to come to Him and renounce our sin, and He lays out a surprising joy—mercy!

Our view of God's nature informs our actions at this point. If we see God as an angry ogre, ready to strike us down, hiding may be the best option. But if God is a wondrously gentle and compassionate shepherd, then we should take our sin to Him and find complete and total mercy.

How is your view of God informing what you do with your sin? What is keeping you from confessing and renouncing your sin before Him today?

DAY 3

READ:

1 Kings 11:14-40

FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Kings 11:30-39

NOTES

There are two things about God that make Him the most reliable, most believable, most trustworthy being in the entire universe. Usually when we are tempted to doubt God's wisdom or love or plan, it's because we fail to remember one of these two anchor truths.

The first thing is God's nature, His character. The attributes of God that He has revealed proclaim loudly that He is slow to anger, abounding in faithful love and truth, forgiving, and also just (see Ex. 34:6-7). God's character is constant and steady. He is who He is.

The second reality is God's covenants, His promises. When God makes a covenant, He keeps it. When God declares a promise, He is faithful and carries it out. His Word never fails. He has a perfect record in doing exactly and fully what He has promised, every time.

When we read about the judgment that God decreed against Solomon and Israel for their idolatry and unfaithfulness, we must remember His mercy was always in sight as well. God made promises to David, and He would keep them.

This is why we can always trust Him. When the temptation comes to doubt God because of our circumstances, we need to get these anchor truths in front of us. God is good; God keeps His Word. God is faithful; God does what He has promised. In our lives, when we feel the disruptive experience of affliction or worry about the affections of God toward us, we can look to God's covenant promises He has made in Christ; He will not put to shame His children. We can remember His character of mercy and love and choose to rest in His sovereign purposes. The twin peaks of God's character and God's promises stand forever as a testimony to His never-ending faithfulness.

What should you remember about the character and promises of God when you are tempted to doubt God or be dismayed by your circumstances?

DAY 4

READ:

Titus 3

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Titus 3:4-7

NOTES



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #15: GOD IS MERCIFUL

Mercy refers to God's compassion and is often expressed in God's withholding something, such as punishment for sin (Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 3:5). Both mercy and grace are undeserved, meaning humanity can do nothing to earn God's mercy and grace. If one could, then it would no longer be the free gift of mercy or grace.

Why should God save and redeem you? Maybe you would answer that by saying you are a good person. You know you are not perfect, but you've done more right than wrong and have generally been a decent human being. Perhaps you would say you've been sincere. You weren't faking it when you went to church and sat in Bible study and sang in the choir. That has to count for something. Maybe you would emphatically say: "I believe! That's why God should save me!" You would put forth your act of faith as the very reason God should rescue you out of the fires of hell.

Each of those answers, as good as they sound, would be wrong. Today's passage shows us the exact reason why God would save and rescue any one of us—because of His mercy and grace. The Holy Spirit really wants us to see and understand this rightly. It was the kindness of God and His love that moved Him to action to save us, not our works, not our sincerity, and not even our faith. God sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins to save us according to His mercy. That's the grandest and greatest reason of all. God is our Savior. Jesus Christ is our Savior. We only bring our sin to the table.

The implications of this truth are staggering. No matter how deep your sin is (it's far deeper than you could ever imagine), no matter how far from Him you feel (and the gulf is much wider than you know), God's mercy moved Him to act for you! You don't have to try and clean up yourself and impress God by your good works to get Him to love you. He's not rescuing only the most zealous and sincere of people, leaving those with doubts and questions behind. He's not waiting with bated breath for you to believe so that He can finally do something for you. He already did it in Christ. He holds out His mercy and love to all who will come and receive it. Will you?

**What have you been relying on to be your salvation?
Has it been God's mercy and grace? If not, what's
keeping you from relying on His sacrificial love alone?**

DAY 5

READ:

Matthew 18

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 18:21-35

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Now the time has come when God's kindness and goodwill towards guilty man is to be fully made known. His power was seen in creation. His justice was seen in the flood. But His mercy remained to be fully revealed by the appearing and atonement of Jesus Christ!"¹

-J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

Imagine you came into a rather large and extensive fortune. How would others know you had been the recipient of such wealth? Maybe the news media would pick up the story and broadcast your acquisition of the fortune. But the surest way others would know of your new wealth would be the way your life would change. Maybe you would be one of those wise investors who is cautious and slow to spend any money, not making dramatic changes right away, but it's probable that any one of us would begin to show our wealth by our spending and investing.

So how do others know you've received God's mercy and love? The answer must be the same—mercy and love should start trickling and pouring out of your life. People who have been given mercy extend mercy. This is right at the heart of Jesus' parable in Matthew 18:21-35. You would imagine the servant who had been forgiven an incredible debt (think billions of dollars) would have had the capacity to forgive a much lesser debt (say, one hundred bucks) owed by a fellow servant. Yet he failed completely.

Jesus told this parable to get us to consider our own hearts. Forgiveness and showing mercy to others does not always come easy. Our sinful nature has infected us so deeply that we're often adverse to showing mercy toward others. But the more we get into our heads and hearts the extravagant mercy that God has shown us in Christ, the more we are changed to be merciful people. The more we take our sin to the Lord and entrust ourselves to His mercy, the more we can open ourselves to others and extend mercy to them.

Have you received God's mercy through faith in Jesus Christ? How does God's wealth of love and compassion reveal itself in your life?

GROUP

NOTES

POINT 1: Punishment is promised to all who disobey the Lord (1 Kings 9:4-9).

God repeatedly teaches in Scripture that _____ results in His _____ and the fulfillment of His good _____ for His people.

? Why does God repeatedly remind His people of the blessings of obedience?

The promise of blessings also comes with _____ for disobedience. The Lord is _____ to His Word and His covenants—He will respond to sin with _____.

POINT 2: Mercy is extended to all who return to the Lord (1 Kings 11:30-39).

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #15: GOD IS MERCIFUL

Mercy refers to God's _____ and is often expressed in God _____ something, such as punishment for sin (Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 3:5). Both mercy and grace are _____, meaning humanity can do nothing to earn God's mercy and grace. If one could, then it would no longer be the _____ gift of mercy or grace.

? How should we respond to the mercy of God, whether shown to us or others?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Let none despair on account of the greatness of their sins, or of the judgments of God which are already inflicted on them. God will suffer none to 'seek his face in vain.' Let every one then bewail 'the plague of his own heart,' and offer up believing prayers 'towards God's holy oracle.'"²

—Charles Simeon (1759-1836)

POINT 3: Salvation is provided to all who fall on the Lord (Titus 3:4-7).

The kings of Israel were all _____ in one way or another, and we are like them in many ways, foolish and disobedient. But God has made the way of salvation possible by sending His _____, Jesus, the fullness of God in _____, our true _____.

? In addition to sending Jesus, what are some ways God has shown His love and kindness toward humanity?

God's gift of salvation for those who repent and believe is accomplished by the _____ of the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ, our Savior. We are saved not by our works but in spite of our sin. We are saved by God's _____ and _____.

? How does the fact that we are undeserving of salvation magnify the glory of God's mercy in saving us?

MY RESPONSE

Because our punishment has been withheld from us and placed on Christ as an act of God's mercy, we seek to extend mercy to all others, quick to forgive any wrongdoing, so that we might display the heart of the gospel before a watching world.

- **HEAD:** How does our God of compassion and mercy compare with the gods of this world?
- **HEART:** Have you received God's gracious gift of mercy in Jesus Christ? How will you express your worship of our Savior today?
- **HANDS:** What are some ways you will show mercy in Jesus's name to those who seem the least deserving of mercy?

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"We have but one Saviour; and that one Saviour is Jesus Christ our Lord. Nothing that we are and nothing that we can do enters in the slightest measure into the ground of our acceptance with God. Jesus did it all. And by doing it all He has become in the fullest and widest and deepest sense the word can bear—our *Saviour*."³

—B. B. Warfield (1851-1921)