

PART ONE

MERCY OF GOD

Mercy of God is an important ingredient in the Christian life. I learned about the mercy of God when many times I found that injustice has been done or when I am in a position to pronounce a judgment. The more authority we have, the more we must balance it with the understanding of mercy. Authority without mercy becomes tyranny. God is all-powerful; His name itself means almighty, Almighty God. Our God is abundant in mercy. And His mercy is new every morning and His mercy endures forever.

I began to understand the mercy of God when there was a particular case where this brother has done something that needed some judgment. It was serious enough because it did not glorify the body of Jesus Christ. I was in a position to take an action that would bring justification to the situation. And I spent my time in prayer in God. I asked, "God how shall I handle this situation?" It's serious enough because it is causing hurt in the body of Christ. It has nothing to do with me personally. It has to do with that person's action to the body of Christ. Between that brother and me, we have a good relationship. I want you to understand that; it has nothing to do with me. But there were some things that were done that didn't glorify the Lord. The actions were done out of irresponsibility, out of a lack of fear of the Lord. And I was right in the position to do something about it. But of course, I always bring it before God in prayer. I spent 2 hours in prayer and during the 2 hours, the Lord never said any thing. But when I finished and got up, finally I heard Him say in my spirit, "Mercy." The Lord began to say, "Just show mercy in this case." And the Lord said, "Blessed are those who are merciful for they shall receive mercy."

We need to understand mercy because mercy is tied up to grace. In Heb. 4, it talks

about how that when we come to the throne of God we may find mercy and obtain grace. If you do not understand mercy, you cannot get more grace. And the mercy of God is also tied up to healing. When Bartimaeus a blind man heard Jesus was coming along the way, he recognized that He was the Messiah and by his confession that He was the Son of David. But the recognition of the Messiah is not enough. He said, "Son of David have mercy on me." He was appealing to the mercy of God for healing. There are other incidences that we see how that the mercy of God was tied up to healing. Like the man who came to Jesus and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son."

In the Old Testament, the revelation of God was crystallized in the ark. And God gave the ark a special name. It was called the Mercy Seat. Why didn't God call it a judgment seat? Because if He called it a judgment seat none of us will be able to get there. We understand the judgment of God. One of the principles of the Christian life is to understand the judgment of believers. The seat of God for judgment is the same seat for mercy. And it depends on our knowledge on the mercy of God that we could approach Him boldly. If you know that God is a powerful judge, you may not get that close to Him. I assure you that you would probably be afraid of Him. Judgment brings fear but mercy brings faith. When you are aware that He loves you and He will accept you not based on what you have done, it brings boldness to come before Him. It gives you a boldness to come right to the throne of God and just sit on His lap. Paul said it; you remember when Paul says we are seated with Christ Jesus. We are seated together with Him in the heavenly places, because of the mercy of God.

Lets look at Matt. 7:1-2 Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you will give will be the measure you get.

Here is Lk. 6:38 working in a judgment area. The bible says the way you judge the same measure of judgment will fall on you. How would you like some one to be critical of you, judging you all the time? None of us like that kind of situation. Yet, what we do to others is going to be measured back to us. I believe in giving out mercy. If giving out judgment brings judgment, I rather give out mercy and have mercy. So, when we release mercy we began to receive mercy.

King David understood mercy. There were times in his life where he could have pronounced judgment on some of his subjects. He could have killed Saul twice. But he said because he recognized the anointing on his life he didn't kill him. What did he practice? Mercy. After all king Saul was coming after his life. He had a right, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. He had a right in the Old Testament to come against the king. His life was at stake. Saul was the source of his troubles. But he did not; he showed mercy. And later on in his life when he needed mercy, he found mercy. Look at the mistakes he made. His adultery with Bathsheba. You notice he obtained mercy. The mercy of God showered upon him.

What we do to others or our attitudes towards others in an invisible way affects our relationship with God. If you remember the Lord's Prayer: *Our Father who art in heaven. Forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.* Forgiveness is based on mercy. If you don't have mercy, you cannot forgive. Forgiveness can only come when you release judgment. In other words, we all have a right to judge in many areas. But we are only to judge things. Paul says that the spiritual man judges all things.

Jesus in Matt. 7:1 spoke about judging a person. When you judge a person, you are judging more than things. I can judge the fruit and I can judge the various works and we all practice judgment to a certain extent. When you choose to buy a certain brand of watch instead of another brand, you are exercising judgment. In your estimation, you feel and you think that particular brand is better than the other. When you chose to go to a certain barber instead of the other, it could be No. 1 convenience, but if the barbers are in the same location, you choose the one because in your judgment he would do a better job.

When you buy a house, you make a judgment. When you say that this particular house is a better house than the other, you have pronounced a judgment. When you are an employer and the employees are under your command, you make a judgment when you promote one above the other. Without an evaluation, you can't determine people's progress. When we choose which speaker to invite to our church and which not to invite, who are welcome and who are not welcome, we have

made certain judgment. We have determined which of these are of benefit to the Body, and which we don't feel to be of benefit to the body of Christ at the moment. We have made judgments. We do that all the time in our life.

When you are led of God to link up with your life partner, you have made a judgment and you have felt that this is the one God has for you. Usually you think that he or she would be the most suitable as a life partner in your life. You have made a decision a judgment. We make judgments all the time but the difference in pronouncing judgment over things over situations, over the fruits of peoples' life and over people is different.

Jesus was able to divide that but some Christians are no able to divide. Jesus could divide between sin and sinner. He hates sin but He loves the sinner. Jesus was able to divide between the two. Jesus did not judge the sinner but Jesus judge sin. When a woman was caught in adultery and all the Pharisees brought her to Him saying what shall we do to her because the law says stone her. Jesus said let him who have no sin cast the first stone. Do you know what He was saying? Judge yourself. And according to the bible, He started writing on the ground. Some modern scholars thought that He was just scribbling on the sand, things that have no meaning. I believe that He wrote the sins of all those people around by the word of knowledge.

I just checked that up in a tiny little booklet written by Sadhu Sundar Singh where he had a vision and he was talking to Jesus. Jesus said that at one time when He was confronting these people who had the woman and they wanted to stone her, He knelt down and wrote on the sand the sins of the people. If you read the bible very carefully, He wrote the sin of the first person and the first one went. Then He wrote the sin of the second one and the second one went away. Then it says they left one by one. They themselves had to be judged.

The only one who had the right and authority to cast the stone who had no sin was Jesus. Jesus had the right to throw the stone. But it's interesting to know that when you have reached that stage of perfection you are also perfect in mercy. Mercy was full in His life. And He chose not to judge. He hated sin. When all her accusers had

gone away He turned to the woman and asked, "Woman where are your accusers?" She was stunned because she had never seen such a thing before. She said, "Lord they are all gone." Jesus said, "Go and sin no more."

It's obvious that He hated sin. The wonderful thing about our Lord Jesus is that He could divide the sin and the sinner. And He could look into our life and divide the disobedience in our life to the person that we really are. And in doing that, He could still love us. But what happens among some Christians is that they relate a person's action to that person themselves. Of course, that person produces the action. But we conclude from the action of the person that, that is the nature of that person. So, we find it hard to love that person. We see the sin and the sinner to be one. We don't divide them.

I am sure you know some people who have caused hurts in your life. They have done many things to you, said many wrong words, and did many abusive things. And in your life, every thing you know about them was a bad thing. Every incidence that you know about them was a bad incidence. And every time you see the picture of that person, you see the devil. And in your mind, you conclude that guy is the devil himself. So, you began to relate the actions of that person as the nature of that person. And you see the two to be one. You say this is what that person is, that person is good for nothing. When you do that, it begins to cripple your love. You can't release mercy. Mercy comes from love. When you want to love that person you find it difficult because you say the person's action and the person's nature and the person's personality are all wrapped up together.

But God still could see the difference. The bible tells us God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that who ever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. If we have lived in the time of Paul and we saw how he persecuted the Christians and imprisoned them, we may have judged him harshly. He did it for the Jewish religion. But God sees. Paul says, "I did it in ignorance and I obtained mercy." God saw his potential. God isolated Paul from his action. God saw that his actions were not his true self. God saw the apostle that was there in embryo. God saw the great missionary. God saw the many souls that are going to come to his life. God saw what he really could be. And God isolated his actions from his person. And Paul obtained mercy.

The bible says judge no one. Jesus said judge not. That is not contradictory to I Cor. 2 where it says the spiritual man judges all things. We have to judge things in order to make a decision. We have to judge and evaluate a person's action and isolate it from judging a person. See the judgment that Jesus is talking about is not judging things or actions. It is condemnation. Condemnation goes beyond judging things. I Cor 2 tell us to judge things. The spiritual man judges all things. If you don't judge things, you can't live your life. For example, if you don't judge things you will be swayed by every doctrine that comes. You will submit to every heresy that comes. To guard against heresy we judge. We have to judge whether a particular author is a good author or not a good author. By doing that, you are pronouncing a judgment. But you are not pronouncing a judgment of a person. You are pronouncing a judgment on the works. You are not pronouncing a judgment on the author. You are pronouncing a judgment on the book. You should be able to differentiate that. We need judgment of things in order to function properly. Otherwise, we are unprotected. Heresy can come by every whim of doctrine. But that judgment of things is a positive judgment. It is a judgment in order to progress. So, you judge sufficiently to make a decision and a course of action so that you could move towards the future.

Some people go beyond that. They move beyond the normal judgment necessary to function in this life. In Phil. 1 where Paul was praying for the Philippians, he says that I pray that your love may grow in judgment. Discernment implies judgment of things. You are allowed to grow in discernment. In other words, don't let people take advantage of your love. Your love grows in discernment. Yet, judgment has a limit. Sometimes people go beyond that. And they begin to judge that person. When you begin to judge that person what you are doing is actually no more judgment in the positive sense. It is actually condemnation. Condemnation is when it gets personal. And sometimes it gets emotional and irrational.

I have known some time people who judge others and condemn them until some of the things they say are very irrational. See I could know 'A' and I could know 'B'. 'A' thinks 'B' is a devil and goes around condemning until it's just beyond reason. The things that are said are no more reasonable. When it's beyond the realm of reason its

no more judging things. It's outward judging a person. And the measure you use will be the measure given back to you.

The Holy Spirit does not condemn. Neither does the human spirit condemn. Conviction is different from condemnation. The word *condemn* is an English word that means taking a chop and chopping a product when it comes along. Condemnation involves writing off a person's future whereas judging things does not write off a person's future yet. See I can judge a person's action and evaluate a person for the purpose of taking a course or plan an action to help that person. For example if you want to help somebody and you know he has a problem, you already pronounced a judgment. The fact that you believe he has a problem means you have judged him. But it's judging his action and not judging him yet.

So for example this brother may have some problem, I check it with God, and I check it with the Word. My conclusion means that I have judged. I have not reached a point where I write his future off. When you judge just his actions and you bring correction into his life, you have not written off his future. You know that there is still hope. You know that there is a plan in his life. You can see goodness in his life. You want to bring him into the right direction. But when you reached a point where you write a person off, you have moved from judging things to condemnation. And that is when mercy is no more there. Mercy is given because there is still a future.

The reason why Jesus Christ forgives us is because God could still see a future in us. If we have no future, we would have been condemned like the devil. The devil is condemned but we are judged. There is a difference. We are judged for our actions and we need repentance. But the devil is condemned. So there is a time limit given. Then there is a time that comes for eternal judgment and after eternal judgment there is condemnation. You have no second chance that is for those who have not come to receive the mercy of Jesus.

So, the mercy of God is an important ingredient in a Christian life. Jesus said in Matt. 5 blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. If we understand this

verse, we realize that mercy is given back to us. And Jesus said it shall be measured back to you good measure pressed down. You see the popular Christians in the world. And you see how one ministry judges another and starts condemning. Before long, you see the very same ministry under condemnation. What you measure out will be measured back to you.

Jesus said, "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye but do not consider the plank in your own eye. How can you say to your brother let me remove the speck from your eye when there is a plank in your own eye. Hypocrite, first remove the plank from your own eye and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye." The principle that Jesus brings forth is very important here. He is not saying that we should not correct and help each other. He is not saying that we should not help each other when we see wrong in another person. If you love a brother or a sister with the love of the Lord, and you know they are doing certain things wrong you would tell them. Of course, your telling them is guided by this principle here.

Jesus said that if you see a speck in your brother's eye, don't just go straight away and tell the brother you got a speck in your eye when you have a plank in your eye. Jesus did not say don't do anything. Look at what He said. He is saying judge yourself. The only person who is worthy to help another person is one who knows how to first pass self-judgment. The fact that Jesus tells to take the plank out of your own eye means that you have first pronounced self-judgment. We have to judge ourselves before we are in the position to help another person. You judge yourself and say I got a plank in my eye let me pull it out first. And then you can go to that brother and take out the speck.

Self-judgment must come first. And in the same area, you judge another you judge yourself first. What happens is many people are giving out judgment without judging themselves and it hurts the body of Christ. Do you know that it is very hard to pull out specks from people's eyes when there are planks in your own eye? No wonder they go around hurting people.

And there is something marvelous about self-judgment. When you judge yourself, people will bring themselves to you to allow you to judge them. But those who have not judged themselves nobody wants them to judge them. So, we have to examine our position, our standing and ourselves before we judge. And because of that very reason, I withhold from areas where I have no standing in. When I was starting off in the ministry and have not pastored a church before, I saw many problems in churches but I kept my mouth shut. How could I tell people how to run a church when I myself have not pastored any? I kept my mouth shut. I saw many problems but I kept my mouth shut. Then later when I had my own church to run I saw all the problems in a different perspective. Then I was in a better position to help other churches.

It's like this my father love badminton and he used to watch badminton. Every time a player makes mistakes, he passes comment. You know the only problem he himself doesn't play badminton. He is telling the badminton players how to play when he himself don't know how to play. The judgments he made would be blunt and inaccurate. That is the reason why a sports commentator is usually someone who knows the sport or plays the sport very well. They can give the right comment on what is going on. Many times, it is a non-badminton player who judges badminton players.

The best way of correction is by doing it yourself. You feel that everybody should pray. You go to them and say you must pray but you yourself never show yourself as a person of prayer. Christianity is more caught than taught. We catch it more by inspiration and by example. Many times people will say, "Don't look to the leaders; don't look to man, look to Jesus." The purpose of leadership is that the leaders be living examples of Jesus Christ. It is a universal fact that people will look up to people. If you are in leadership, you should realize that people would look to you. And the way to lead is by showing forth you can do it not by telling them how to do it. So, we have to withhold judgment over things we have not done before. That is part of mercy.

If you understand mercy, you must realize that there are levels of judgment. And there are levels of mercy. As long as you have not come into the area yet you have no right to judge any thing you have no experience in. Whenever you think you see

a problem you have to not only judge the problem Jesus said you must judge yourself. Then you check yourself, am I in the position, am I in the place to help them. If you find the answer is no withhold judgment.

This is why sometimes it is very difficult for someone who is not married to judge people who are married. In the same way when we have not experienced things that people have gone through we should withhold judgment until you got the experience. We judge the action of a 4 year old differently from the action of a 12 year old. To the 4 year old, we give a greater liberty. To the 12 year old, we give less because they are supposed to understand more. Before judgment of others comes, (that is judging things and not condemning things) self-judgment must come. So Jesus Christ says here that you must judge yourself, take out the plank from your own eye. Then you will see clearly, where you could help another person by pulling the speck out of their eyes.

We must learn the secret of withholding judgment. To withhold judgment is to tell yourself to come to a decision not to pass any condemnation because it's beyond you. You don't learn Algebra before you learn Mathematics. So, in the same way if I don't have knowledge of Algebra I can't judge Algebra. So, I withhold judgment.

The secret of practicing mercy is to withhold judgment. Mercy is most relevant when there is imperfection. If every one is perfect, mercy is redundant because no mistakes are made. But we live in a society that is imperfect and we live among believers who are still imperfect. And being imperfect, we have to learn the art of withholding judgment and putting forth mercy.

The ability to give mercy is yours when you are in a position to judge. Jesus said judge not that you may not be judged. He talks about how you have to judge yourself and determine yourself whether you are in a position. Mercy is not yours to give yet if you have no right to judge. The right to give mercy is only when you have the right to judge. It is yours to give when you are in a position to judge. When you are in a position and you withhold judgment then you have practice mercy.

Very few people do it you know why. Those who don't have the position to judge love to judge. They like to play judge. Then those who are in the position to judge do not understand mercy. They will set themselves as the judge. They enjoy judging because judging others give them a sense of superiority. And some people who are insecure who are in no position to judge run others down because of their own insecurity. These all has to be dealt with.

When you are in the position to judge and you withhold judgment, you have practiced mercy. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. When you practice mercy, you are being like God. The most wonderful thing about authority is that you have a choice not to oppress but to give out mercy. The more God blesses you and increases your position the more chance you have to practice mercy. The more abundant mercy you sow the more abundantly you reap of the mercy of God. If you understand mercy, it will bring you into the depths of God.

Let me just give you a glimpse; you remember when Moses talked with God. God said I am going to destroy all the Israelites. Numbers 14:12 *I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.* But Moses understood mercy. God has a right to judge and Moses has a right to judge too. God even said Moses I will make you a mighty nation. And Moses said in verse 18 *The Lord is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression.* "You got the right to destroy us. We don't deserve to live but we appeal to your mercy." That's a powerful approach. Moses was saying, "See God we don't deserve it but have mercy because Your nature is merciful." You have such power with God when you understand mercy.

David understood that when God judged him. God gave him 3 choices. And he said Lord let me fall into the hands of God because He is merciful. If you understand mercy, you dare to pray fantastic prayers. Moses prayed, "God forgive these rebellious, hardened and faithless people. Forgive them." See mercy is not based on a person's action. But it's based on God's nature and what God can do in that situation.

