

The Mercy of God

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Date: 13 September 2020

[0 : 00] Let's join together in the worship of God and we're going to sing from Psalm 51 and at verse 6.

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All mine iniquities blot out, thy face hide from my sin. Create a clean heart, Lord renew a right spirit me within.

Cast me not from thy sight, nor take thy Holy Spirit away. Restore me thy salvation's joy, with thy free spirit me stay.

Then will I teach thy ways unto those that transgressors be, and those that sinners are shall then be turned unto thee.

[1 : 25] We shall sing these verses. Psalm 51 from verse 6. Behold thou in the inward parts, with truth delighted art. Behold thou in the inward parts, with truth delighted art and wisdom.

Thou shalt make me know with thy hidden part.

Do thou wishest drinker me, I shall be cleansed soul.

Ye washeth me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow.

Of gladness and of joyfulness, make me to hear the voice.

[2 : 55] That's all this very voice. Which thou hast broken me rejoice.

All mine iniquity, total. Thy face of life, God, my sin.

Create a clean heart, Lord renew a right.

Set me within. Cast me not from thy side, nor take thy holy spirit away.

Restore me thy salvation. Restore me thy salvation. Joy will thy priest let me stay.

[4 : 16] Then will I teach thy wish unto those that God's grace such be.

And those that sender shall shall let be turned red unto thee.

Let us join together in prayer. Let us pray. O most gracious God, enable us to draw near with the confidence that as we come to you, that you are coming to us.

We do not deserve the mercy that abounds towards sinners. But we acknowledge that your word declares it to us.

We give thanks for the words of the psalmist that speaks to us of the experience of one of the saints of the Old Testament.

[5 : 37] We came to discover his sin as before the eyes of God. Sin that was in his heart and sin that he committed openly, flagrantly, and without the sense of shame that accompanies it.

And so, it is said of many of us when we sin in that fashion, that we bring shame upon ourselves, even though we might not have that sense of shame that should accompany it.

Help us today to draw near with the heartfelt appreciation of being in the presence of a holy God, even as sinners who have little comprehension of what true holiness is.

But we sin against you, thought, word, and deed. That's what we say so often, and yet our confession may be hollow in the sense in which our thoughts are not as well regulated as they should be in the light of your word.

Our deeds, they may not be, and they truly are not as they ought to be. Our actions betray us for our sinfulness.

[7 : 06] Our words, our speeches, is careless, and often it leads us to discover the danger that it is in the tongue of man kept unbridled.

Let us be together. Lord, we pray that you would show mercy for each and every one of our sins that we have disclosed and declared in your presence, and yet not accounted for as we ought.

others that may be in our lives in great number that we have not been aware of.

We pray that you would guide us to the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom forgiveness is possible, the cleansing that he is able to administer for all who come to him.

We pray that you would bless your word to us, that would magnify him in our presence and in our eyes, that we might flee to him with greater regularity, that our thoughts would be so taken up with him in the glory that this is, and that we so seldom take time to contemplate.

[8 : 30] We pray that you would remember this world in which we live. We give thanks that you have not turned your back upon it, that we have the opportunity to turn to your word and that you speak to us through that word.

We give thanks for every way in which that word goes out to the far corners of the earth, even as we have met at this time. We trust that your word will be heard by others.

We give thanks that we have heard it, and that we are in its hearing even today. May it be blessed to us and to all who are within the compass of its searching light, that we may reach into the innermost being, the reasons of our being, so that we can be under its tutelage and under the guidance that it brings in the hand of the Spirit.

We pray that you are blessed to all your people. Whenever they are to be found, may it be a word of comfort to those who are broken.

In body or mind may it bring healing, and bring their attention to focus not on themselves, but on one who is the great physician of souls. We pray for those who are strangers to him, and ask that he would draw them to himself.

[9 : 58] I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men to me, and we pray that through the ministry of the preached word today, that eyes would be drawn to look upon the face of Jesus.

Jesus, we think of that awful day, when he was crucified between two thieves on the cross. In the passage by, they had that spirit that, that saw him, as a root out of a dry ground.

They walked their heads, they shook their heads, and they saw what they thought was the just penalty of a holy God upon a vile sinner.

What they saw was, in effect, through, because at that point, Christ that was there was bearing the sins of the world. And we marvel at the way in which so many yet pass by and shake their heads and think, that this Christ is not for them.

We pray, Lord, your blessing upon the world, that those who may even, just in a fleeting moment, be grasped or gripped by the power of what Christ has done on our behalf.

[11 : 29] Remember, our homes, our families, our loved ones, we pray for our neighbours, our villages, our towns, our cities. We pray for the nations of the earth, and we are especially mindful of them at this time.

We pray that you would bring healing, when there is a time of great fear, and alarm at the spread of this virus, that is not any notion of going away of its own accord.

We pray for wisdom for those who are seeking, to find remedies. May that be provided into your own hands, and be sanctified by you, that nothing would be lost, of your glory, in the midst of all that is done.

For you are able to speak to us, even, a word of rebuke and reproach, for those who go on, as if this world is everything. And beyond this world, there is nothing.

Nothing could be further from the truth, because this world is nothing. And beyond it is an account, to be given, to the one who created this world, and all in it.

[12 : 48] So hear our petitions. Bless your word, we pray. On this Lord's day, we pray that you would be blessed. All you have sent out, to preach the word, to do it, with an eye to your glory.

May they be encouraged, and seen, and hearing of souls, coming to us hence, of their own need of Christ. Open the eyes of our understanding, that we may be persuaded, that we are of that number.

Continue with us now, we pray, remembering all we entrust, to your care and keeping. Also, governess, the royal household, and the family of the Queen.

Pray that you would bless them, one and all. Sanctify your word, to all who are under it, in whatever way. And cleansing from sin, through Christ the Redeemer.

We ask all things in his name. Amen. We're going to hear the word of God, as we have it in the Old Testament Scriptures, reading from the book of Psalms, and Psalm 103.

[13 : 55] Psalm 103, we're going to read the whole of the Psalm. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me.

Bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities? Who healeth all thy diseases?

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction? Who crowneth thee with lovingkindnesses and tender measures? Who satisfies thy mouth with good things?

So that thy youth is renewed like the eagles? The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever.

[14 : 58] He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far as he removed out transgressions from us. Like a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust. As for man his days are as grass, as a flower of the field so he flourisheth. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall knoweth no more.

But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children. To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments, to do them.

The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, ye as angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

[16 : 19] Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works in all places, of his dominion.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. The Lord, at his blessing, to this reading of his word, and to his name be the praise. We can read again at verse 8.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards them that fear him. And so on. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

As you can see, perhaps from your Bibles, the psalm before us has been composed, it is believed, by David, the sweet psalm singer of Israel.

[17 : 45] Many suggest that the psalm was composed in his old age. It begins and ends with praise.

And as Professor Alan Harmon says, with charity, with clarity almost comparable to the New Testament, the psalm proclaims the greatness of God's love for his people and his gracious removal of their sins.

The verse I would like us to look at today is really a declaration of what mercy is. If we look at the words of verse 8, The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

And then again at verse 11, For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards them that fear him.

We see sandwiched between the words, the words of our text, which really are descriptive of the mercy of God.

[19 : 02] The metrical psalms have the words, With us he dealt not as we sinned. Nor did we quiet our ill. But in sing psalms, he does not punish our misdeeds, or give our sins their just reward.

I want us to begin by considering, first of all, the reality of David's experience of God's mercy. Secondly, the compassion that undergirds it.

And thirdly, the judgment of God that is averted because of that mercy. First of all then, the reality of God's mercy.

We can confidently assert that David knew God. First of all, through the prism of his word, he is familiar with the scriptures, and able to refer to them.

And the composition is very much influenced by what he knows from the scripture. He is quoting freely from the Old Testament, and the book of Exodus, and chapter 34.

[20 : 23] More than a passing similarity to the words we find there. The Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and sin.

And that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the children's children, and to the third, and to the fourth generation.

We see in the psalm that there is an echo of these words at the very least.

But not only is he familiar with the scripture, he also seems to know the God of the scripture. There's a first-hand knowledge of him, and in particular as the one through whom he has received forgiveness of sin.

The person who has received this forgiveness truly appreciates it for what it is. There are many who live in the world who have placed intolerable burdens upon themselves because they are convinced they need to be forgiven for something done or not done, and they do not know where to go for that forgiveness.

[21 : 54] The result for them is misery or worse. David had in his lifetime discovered the true sinfulness of his heart, but mercifully he also came to know where he needed to go with his sins.

I'm not saying he knew instantly where to go, or that even when he knew that he did go. I am saying that until he did, it caused him grief, and the sin which remained unconfessed, and its penalty awaited, and that discomfort was probably something that he had to live with.

Perhaps it was like that for him. In that psalm that we heard sung at the outset, Psalm 51, a psalm that was composed in the light of David's experience after his adultery with Bathsheba, God had to expose him through the parable delivered by the prophet Nathan.

And until that exposure, although sin was in his life, and the effect of it was felt perhaps only in part, God chose to expose him in that way, so that once exposure came, and once the parable was brought home to him, the grief that accompanied it was evident.

We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. We may use that, we as a shelter from the conviction that we should feel.

[23 : 58] But it will not last. Paul says we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. And that is an appointment we must, like death, keep alone.

St Augustine is reputed to have said, God's benefits will not be before our eyes, unless our sins are also before our eyes.

A.W. Toser, in his own comments, has written to that effect, but logically, his opinion was that until the experience of sin, until without the experience of sin, the experience of mercy would not be a valid one, it wouldn't be a real one.

if man had not sinned, this element, this part of God's own being would not have come to light, it wouldn't have come to fruition, it wouldn't have been something that a person was aware of because their need of it was not there.

In the New Testament, Paul was writing his epistle to Titus, and he reminds the Christians there not to be critical of their unbelieving neighbours, but to remember that they too were once like them.

[25 : 56] Douglas Millen, writing about Paul's words, says the following, this is one of the most penetrating descriptions in the New Testament of the human condition in the depths of its sinfulness and misery.

The root of the problem lies within humans themselves in their uncontrolled desires and anti-social attitudes. So what is it that Paul is saying that brings such a comment from the theologian?

Paul says, put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawler but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men.

For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Christ Jesus our Saviour, that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

[27 : 38] Paul's opinion of man for what he is by nature is there for all to see. despite what some would want to believe the world has not changed in this respect.

the only remedy for the world and all in it remains the same for all have sinned but the provision if it is applied to is able to deal with every sin and every sinner.

The Old Testament prophet saw God in his mercy in his own day as the only answer to man's condition. The prophet Ezra after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great trespass seeing that our God has punished us less than our iniquities deserve.

Our God has punished us less than our trespasses deserve. deserve. And is that not where we see the compassion of God?

Our sins deserve to be punished and yet he holds back from punishing. Read verse 13 like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

[29 : 15] We said at the outset that this is a psalm of praise and C.H. Spurgeon reckons that we ought to praise God as much for what he has not done as much as for what he has done for us.

I wonder if such a thought ever enters into our hearts or even our heads. Let me say this to you whoever you are you must have some sense of your sins and you have accountability to God for them.

If you live life in this world oblivious to them or unconcerned by them all it means is that you are but delaying the moment when God will put them where you cannot but see them and at that point you will know that you are going to answer for them.

That is the reality. So if anything your urgent prayer to God now must be to show mercy to you by putting your sins where you can't but see and if that prayer is made and God answers then he will show you that you have further need of his mercy because it is not enough to know that you are a sinner.

You need to know to turn from that sin and it's not enough to turn from your sin. You need to turn away from the sin to someone else.

[30 : 48] Many have believed that they could do that if they were a slave to a particular sin that that would be the answer to their predicament but it never is.

We've known of men and women who were addicted to some vice or other and their fervent hope was to get away from this addiction and sometimes they managed it.

Sometimes they managed to break the shackles that bound them to that addiction but more often than not they replaced that vice with another maybe not one as extreme or as burdensome but was nevertheless a vice for all that.

Why? Because they had turned from one but not turned to the one to whom they should turn. You must remember that a shackle is a shackle where it is made of rusty iron or the finest gold.

If it keeps you bound you are not free and only Christ can set you free and like every other sinner until we turn to Christ we will remain bound.

[32 : 22] David needed the grace of God in Christ like any other then we can never have peace with God without him and the God of all grace is a compassionate God who is willing to show that Christ to us if we turn from our sin and our eye is seeking one such as Christ we are given the assurance that all we have to do is knock and the door shall be open to seek and we shall find now this is the third and final thing I would like to note the judgment of God that is averted because of his mercy why has God not dealt with us according to our misdeeds God it is not because God is anything other than holy God has dealt with another in our place if it is true of us that we have received his mercy A.W. Pink the preacher and teacher has said

God has exacted from him that is Christ full satisfaction to his justice it is payment God cannot demand twice the sins of the believer may attract the fatherly displeasure of God by way of his chastisements but he will not inflict them with the penalty their sins deserve these sins are blotted out the apostle Paul has written in his epistle to the Colossians you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh hath he quickened together with him having forgiven you all the trespasses blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us which was contrary to us and took it out of the way nailing it to the cross this is what God has done in

Christ Jesus David's expression in verse 12 is worthy of note he says to us as far as east is from the west so far hath he removed our transgressions from us one writer has said however however many miles you think lie between east and west cannot be computed you you cannot look two ways at once you cannot at one and the same time see the sunrise and the sunset you must turn your back on one to see the other when God forgives the sinner he puts our sins on two different horizons in the words of the psalmist according to Bishop Horn what these words of verses 11 to 13 are saying to us for as the heaven is high above the earth so great is his mercy towards them that fear him as far as the east is from the west so far has he removed our transgressions from us like as a father pitied the children so the lord pitieth them that fear him

Bishop Horn says that here we find the most beautiful three folds of multitude we are bidden to contemplate the immeasurable height the boundless extent and the salutary influences of that mercy the goodness of Jehovah and removing our sins and putting them far out of his sight and the fond and tender affection of a father needing to defend nourish and provide for his children to bear with to forgive to receive us in the parental arms of everlasting love audio to know using to and the mercies of God in Christ Jesus are entirely undeserved.

Whatever it is that we do or have done or will yet do, if we need anything we need mercy if they are an offence to God and God alone can direct us to the Christ through whom that mercy becomes ours.

[37 : 06] May we lay hold of him by faith that we may experience the true precious sweetness of that mercy as we receive it here in this world.

May he be pleased to bless to us these few short thoughts. Gracious God, help us to understand that it is, as the psalmist says, yet with you forgiveness is that feared thou mayest be.

And we pray that you would encourage us by directing us to Christ through your word. May your word speak to us and declare to us that wherever we are and whoever we are, our need is great and only Christ can satisfy that need.

For as fallen, hell-deserving sinners, only the mercy of God in Christ will suffice. So we pray your blessing upon this world today, that it may be blessed to one and all, and that through that word that is preached and proclaimed to the far corners of the earth, that the eyes of the blind would be opened, that they would dwell upon the glory of Christ as the one who alone is able to cleanse from all sin.

Go before us now, forgiving us every transgression, and through the passion of the Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus. And now may grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always.

[38 : 38] Amen.