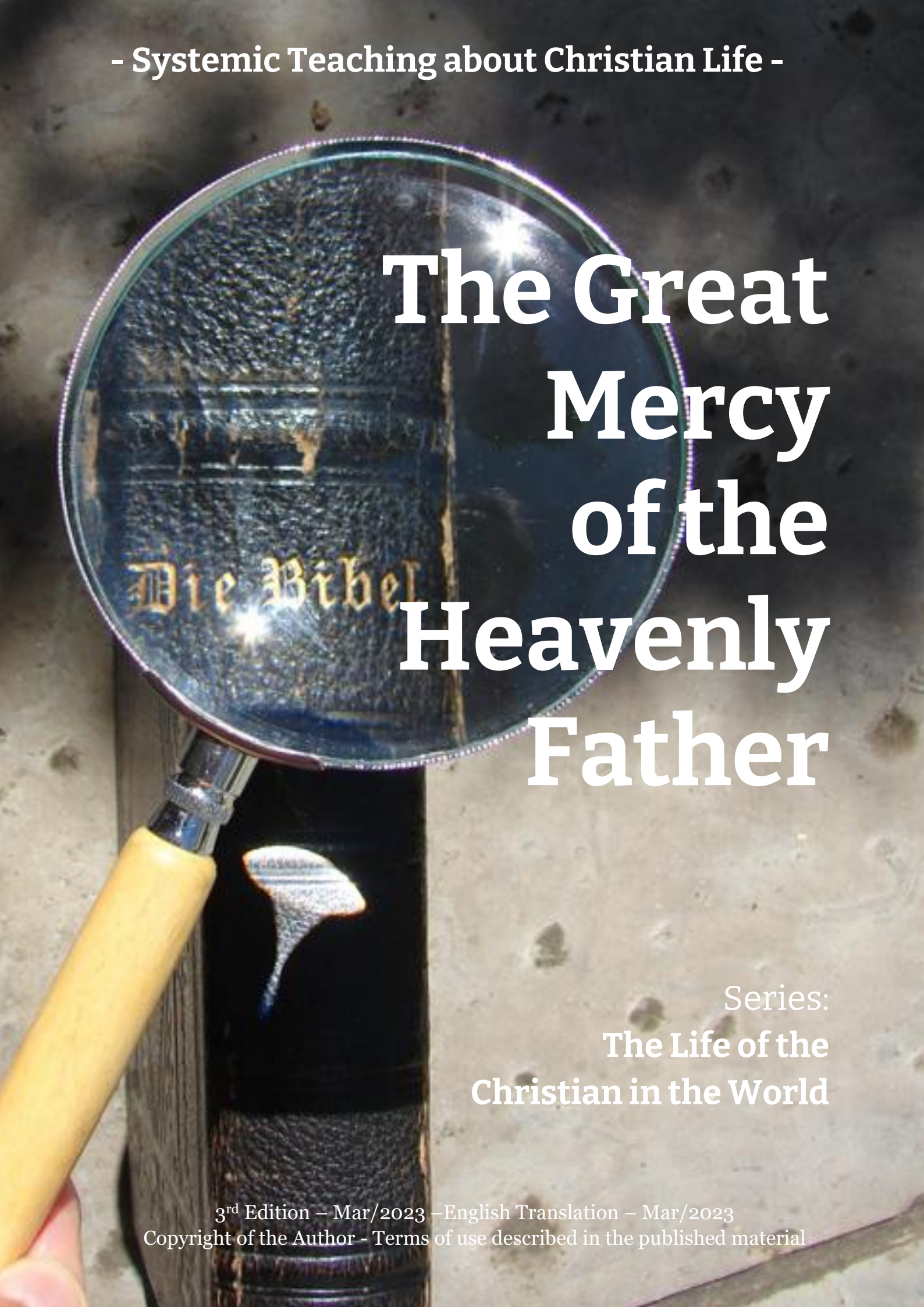


- Systemic Teaching about Christian Life -



# The Great Mercy of the Heavenly Father

Series:  
The Life of the  
Christian in the World

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## General Considerations about Using This Material:

The subject presented in this material aims to provide support to knowledge and an in-depth study of the Bible and the Christian life.

Based on the understanding that in the Christian Bible is contained the consolidation of fundamental and formal records of the writings inspired by God for humanity and each person of it, the contents exposed in this material are not intended to add, ever, anything to the Bible, nor ever remove anything from it. The aim through this subject is to contribute to the exploration of what already was registered and passed on to us over thousands of years of history by the One Creator and Lord of Heaven and Earth.

The contents presented on the next pages, of course, intend to address just a portion of the essential themes of life displayed with such great amplitude in the Bible. On the other hand, however, this subject is presented in a grouped, colligated, organized and systematized manner with the objective to serve as an aid to knowledge and understanding of the Christian life without losing sight of the main aspects of it.

*Ecclesiastes 12: 11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.*

Related words put together, as told in the biblical text above, serve as goads and nails for fixing supports and help for the life of people that hear and receive them. Therefore, one objective of this material is to study and seek a broader understanding of the truths handed down to us by the Unique Pastor and God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

We would still like to suggest that the reading and studying of this material also should always be accompanied by prudence and proper investigation, believing that this is a very healthy habit to be practiced toward any material presented to a person.

The act of acceptance, rejection, or “retaining what is good,” is a personal and individual attribute given to those who receive the wisdom from God and which should be exercised or used by them toward all that comes into their hands.

*Proverbs 8: 12 "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And find out knowledge and discretion.*

*Acts 17: 11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.*

*Proverbs 16: 1 The preparations of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.*

*2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits.*

*3 Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established.*

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Ronald Gortz and Irmelin Gortz, servants of the Lord Jesus Christ!

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*Revelation 21: 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."  
6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.*

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*1Timothy 2: 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,  
4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

More details about these initial considerations are posted at [www.zoominchristianlife.org](http://www.zoominchristianlife.org).

## Contents

Contents .....	4
C1. Mercy: The Facet of Grace That Enables the Expression of the Other Aspects of the same Grace .....	5
C2. The Father of Mercies: An Indispensable Attribute of the Glory of God to be Known and Received .....	9
C3. Paul: An Example with a Special Highlight on the Comprehensiveness of God's Mercy .....	22
C4. Love for God's Mercy .....	33
C5. Is God's Mercy Conditional or Unconditional? .....	38
C6. Maintaining Life Aligned with God's Mercy – Part 1 .....	50
C7. Maintaining Life Aligned with God's Mercy – Part 2 .....	57
C8. The Teaching and Assistance of God's Mercy.....	68
Bibliography.....	72

## **C1. Mercy: The Facet of Grace That Enables the Expression of the Other Aspects of the same Grace**

In the most diverse themes of the Systemic Teaching About the Christian Life, we have insistently tried to emphasize that the Heavenly Father is the one who grants us every good gift and every perfect gift.

From the Heavenly Father, we receive life in body and soul, as well as justification, redemption from subjection to sin, life in Christ, newness of life in the Spirit, eternal life, and all other good gifts, as we exemplify with some texts below:

*James 1: 17 **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.***

*Romans 8: 11 **But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.***

*2 Peter 1: 1 **Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:***  
*2 **Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,***  
*3 **as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ...***

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And among the innumerable and immeasurable gifts that are in God, and which are presented by the Lord as an offer to human beings, there is one gift that is particularly noteworthy in the sense that it is a gift that makes it possible for God to extend all other gifts to human beings and even though they have become sinners, namely: **The gift of mercy!**

**God's mercy towards each human being is not only one of the most sublime and essential aspects of life, but it refers to a fundamental aspect that takes precedence over many other aspects that are also essential for sustaining people's lives, both in the present world and chiefly to eternal life.**

Although the gifts of God exist in countless numbers and have their origin in a source of unlimited supply, they, devoid of heavenly mercy, would not be of benefit to human beings, as they would be entirely deprived of access to these gifts.

Therefore, **God's mercy is a part of the Lord's grace that enables the expression of other facets of the same heavenly and eternal grace,** as the Scriptures also teach us in the following text:

*Hebrews 4: 16 **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

By receiving the facet of grace called mercy, also the other essential aspects that lead to eternal life can be reached in times of need. However, without mercy, as abundant and overflowing as the Lord's grace is, a person would not be able to access the endless gifts that are in God for one's life.

And yet, **God's mercy is the reason because of which a person is not consumed every day and moment that one lives, just as it is why life on Earth still exists and is sustained, no matter how much human beings resist God's grace and love.**

*Lamentations 3: 21 **This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope.**  
 22 **Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.**  
 23 **They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.***

---

Because of God's mercy, a person can find hope for the present and the life that follows one's existence in the current world. However, without God's mercy, all hope would be a vain expectation.

Thus, writing considerations about mercy is not exactly an easy thing to be done, for it refers to one of the most challenging subjects to be addressed and described. And God's mercy is of a beauty and greatness that surpasses all limited human intellectual understanding of what true righteousness is.

As we have already seen above, God's mercy is endless, does not grow old, is based on God's faithfulness, and can be expressed in a multitude of ways, according to the unending riches of God, as is also presented in several psalms, of which we exemplify a few below:

*Psalms 51: 1 **Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.***

*Psalms 69: 16 **Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness (or grace) is good; Turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.***

*Psalms 106: 45 **And for their sake He remembered His covenant, And relented according to the multitude of His mercies.***

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**The challenge of describing God's mercy is enormous, as it permeates all the Lord's actions towards each human being. And it is only because God is merciful that there is a possibility for a person alienated from God by sin**

and rebellion to return to the Creator and the reconciliation of a proper relationship with the Lord.

So, describing or making comments about mercy is challenging, for this action represents describing about a part, virtues, and adjectives of God Himself.

*Psalms 103: 8 **The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.***

*Psalms 111: 4 **He has made His wonderful works to be remembered; The LORD is gracious and full of compassion (or mercy).***

*Psalms 116: 5 **Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful.***

God's mercy tells us about the depths of the Lord Himself. It expresses attributes inseparable from the "Being" of God.

In this way, when the Lord declares that His name is "I Am," certainly in this "I Am" is also included that "He is Merciful and the Source of All Mercy."

Nevertheless, thank God that the Lord Himself, in His rich mercy, assists us to give us the proper understanding of what we need to know about the depths of His attributes. Thank God that He allows us to come to understand what we need to know about His virtues so that we also can experience in abundance what He freely offers us in Christ Jesus.

Since understanding some central aspects of God's mercy plays such a cooperative role so that we may voluntarily receive it more abundantly and continually, it is also in the Lord's mercy itself that we can find provision for us to reach a proper understanding of it and the instruction to relate to it.

*Psalms 119: 124 **Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy, And teach me Your statutes.***

*Romans 9: 23 ... **and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ...***

*1 Corinthians 2: 6 **However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.***

*7 **But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,***

**8** *which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

**9** *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

**10** *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*

**11** *For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.*

**12** *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

**13** *These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

**14** *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

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God, which also includes His condition of mercy, is inscrutable by the natural mind. However, the Holy Spirit is offered to us by the Lord so that we can come to know God in everything that is necessary for our life, which certainly includes the Lord's mercy as one of the first aspects. (The subject of knowledge and understanding of the virtues of God and the action of the Holy Spirit towards us is covered more fully in the themes The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, The Law of Understanding, and Every Good Gift and Every Perfect Gift).

And it is under the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ that it is by the Holy Spirit that we will be guided into all truth and that He will reveal to us the depths of God that we want to propose a more specific reflection on the so precious and necessary mercy that is offered to us by the heavenly kingdom.

Thus, our expectation and prayer are that God, through the Holy Spirit and those who fear Him, makes the understanding of this virtue of the Lord so essential to life increasingly known in the world so that each person comes to understand how fundamental it is for eternal salvation, but also for the continuous growth of each Christian in one's relationship with the Eternal Lord.

*Psalms 103: 4 (Bless the LORD, O my soul), ... Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, ...*



## **C2. The Father of Mercies: An Indispensable Attribute of the Glory of God to be Known and Received**

Mercy cannot be understood dissociated from the knowledge of the glory of God, from the knowledge of the Merciful God. However, knowledge of God's glory also implies the need for growth in knowledge about the creation made by the Lord.

God knows who He is, and God knows who the creation is. However, the creation, as such, needs the enlightenment of the eyes of understanding to come to know who God is and who the creation itself is.

The human being is the most sublime and exalted creation that God has revealed to us. God created the human being in His image and likeness, as explained more fully in the theme of The Gospel of the Creator. The human being, however, is not God, and never will be, just as God is not the creation. A crucial point that needs to be highlighted repeatedly, for by confusing the condition or position of God and human beings, many people start to idolize and worship what is not appropriate for them to do.

When the heavenly revelation that only the Eternal Lord is God and that the creation is a creature is abandoned, the human being starts to put oneself in line with all sorts of evil and to advance rapidly towards a life subject to ungodliness, unrighteousness, and human miseries, as exposed in the text that we recall below:

*Romans 1: 18 **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,***

*19 **because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.***

*20 **For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,***

*21 **because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.***

*22 **Professing to be wise, they became fools,***

*23 **and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.***

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Throughout human history, people have repeatedly sought to live their lives dissociated from the Creator of humankind. And God, to some extent, has allowed each generation to try to follow its own ways as if it were not God who had given them life.

On the other hand, God has also allowed people to experience, to some extent, the consequences of their own choices and ways.

God did not allow what was exposed in the previous paragraphs as if granting an endorsement for people to sin, but so that human beings could understand the action of what opposes people so that they may have a more comprehensive knowledge of good and evil and so that they voluntarily come to choose the righteous ways of God. (As also exposed in the theme The Law of Understanding).

Nevertheless, once a person submits to an evil way, one also becomes an accomplice of evil. And for this, one incurs subjection to sin and the body of sin, as the Scriptures teach us.

Thus, on the one hand, looking deeper into the consequences of association with evil, which is expressed as the body of sin, as widely discussed in the theme The Gospel of God's Righteousness, it becomes very challenging to understand how God allows the human beings to choose paths that bring them so much distress, pain, and suffering.

On the other hand, if we think in the opposite direction, that is, if God did not allow human beings to see the suffering that is caused by walking dissociated from the Lord's instruction and by subjection to sin, human beings would not indeed have the option to choose with understanding and freedom between following God or following the sinner's way and the life that comes from subjection to sin.

Many people ask questions similar to this one: "How can a God of love allow suffering?"

However, if God deprived human beings of seeing any suffering, this created being would never really know what is good and what is evil, what is light and what is darkness. And in this way, one would not indeed be a being with the possibility of choosing or opting for one or the other.

God does not want people to be subject to suffering, but allows them to make choices through which, in part, they see the suffering that comes from the inclination to evil that people in the world have chosen to practice and continue to practice.

God continuously instructs and warns people not to choose evil and warns and exhorts them in many ways. But despite all this, they, countless times, continue to follow their personal positions and choose what is contrary to the good and perfect will of God, also exemplified in the following text:

*Jeremiah 7: 23 "But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.'*

*24 Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward."*

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Over the years, centuries, and millennia, many people's options even turned into iniquities. In other words, despite being contrary to God's will, many people's attitudes began to be transformed into behaviors incorporated into the cultures and traditions of peoples. In this way, one of the central characteristics of iniquities is that they are expressions of evils that can become so rooted in the hearts or minds of people to the point of leading them to repeatedly practice evil, even without considering that they are practicing sin. And this, in turn, also generates such repeated and continuous harvests of pain and suffering.

On the other hand, even though many people try, based on their own wickedness, to cast thoughts contrary to God's righteousness because of the evil they see in the world, when a broader scenario of humanity is also seen from the perspective of God's mercy,

we can see the greatness of God and His wisdom also amid this whole scenario in reference.

**If, on the one hand, we could come to think that the fact that human beings chose to experience evil would be something that denigrated the greatness of God for allowing humanity to do so, on the other hand, if we observe that God's wisdom, through His mercy, also knows how to deal with this choice of human beings, we can see, in all of this, an even greater breadth of God's love that exceeds all human understanding.**

*Ephesians 3: 14 **For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,**  
 15 **from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,**  
 16 **that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,**  
 17 **that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,**  
 18 **may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, --**  
 19 **to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.***

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Meditating on the topic of human beings having the option to choose evil or sin is indeed challenging and intriguing, but if God were only able to love the creation if it chose only good, never made mistakes, and was always obedient to God, the Lord could be defeated on the day that any human being turned away from Him and committed a single act contrary to God's will.

Therefore, this matter needs to be seen with prudence, for God does not push or guide people to practice sin. On the other hand, however, the love of God is not restricted to only being able to love the creation when it acts in perfection or when a human being never commits an error or sin, as the texts below teach us respectively:

*James 1: 13 **Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.***

*Romans 5: 8 **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

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Because it is a creature and not God, the creation is not above all and is not infallible. Therefore, the creature can only be correct and just in everything in the Lord and never dissociated from one's Eternal Creator.

If the creature were infallible by itself, it would be autonomous and not need God. That is, it would be a "god," a proposition of thought that led Adam and Eve to choose subjection to sin.

The creature fails when it moves away from God's direction or thinks it can live without God. When creation does not abide in the dependence on God, it does things that should not be done and starts to live a life devoid of fruits that are according to the will of the Lord and profitable for it.

*John 15: 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."*

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And it is also in the face of all this that the Lord demonstrates that only He is God, doing so by presenting His sovereign provision for people to be able to repent and be saved from their wrong choices, their subjection to darkness, or the eternal condemnation arising from their sins, including those that reached the degree of submission to countless iniquities.

Still in other words, we see that the Scriptures declare that God is love and that if anyone is in God, one is also in the love of the Lord, as exemplified in the following text:

*1 John 4: 16 **And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.***

God demonstrates His love by giving us life and by allowing us to continue to have life. God loves us also because we are His workmanship.

Nevertheless, what happens if this workmanship of God's hands, a fruit of the Lord's love, rebels against the one who created it? If this workmanship of God were to become something extremely despicable and miserable, would God, who is love, be able to continue loving this creature?

And it is to advance in the aspects of the questions above that a broader knowledge of God's mercy and a closer relationship with it is so necessary, which we want to approach here starting by observing other terms that are often associated with mercy in the Scriptures or into which the word *mercy* is also translated, such as:

- ⇒ To sympathize with our weaknesses;
- ⇒ To have compassion;
- ⇒ Constant love;
- ⇒ Goodness;
- ⇒ Longsuffering;
- ⇒ Benignity;
- ⇒ And other similar terms.

Therefore, **God's mercy and God's love intertwine and blend together throughout the Scriptures, for one is part of the other just as mercy is in God's grace and grace manifests itself multiplied in a person's life because of the mercy of the Lord.**

Given this, we understand that we can say that:

- ⇒ 1) **God's mercy is the part of God's love and God's grace that loves the human being even if one is in a miserable and despicable state.**
- ⇒ 2) **God's mercy is the part of God's "Being" that continues to love even that part of the creation that has rejected the Lord.**
- ⇒ 3) **God's mercy is a virtue in God that makes God's love stand out even for the miserable person, the one who turned away from Him, or the one who actively opposed God, to the point that the Lord offers salvation and real, true, or substantial help to the sinner or to the one who rebelled against one's Eternal Creator.**
- ⇒ 4) **God's mercy is the part of God's love that loves all people, even when they are already associated and enslaved to evil and, therefore, dissociated from the path of truth and eternal good.**
- ⇒ 5) **The mercy of God is the love of the Father that continues to offer His love and help even if an individual in the present world rejects the Heavenly Father Himself.**

Here, then, it seems appropriate for us to say that **mercy is the very constant and unchanging love of the Heavenly Father, but especially directed to compassion, goodness, and benignity towards people in their weaknesses or even in their rebellious postures against the Lord.**

**In His mercy, the Heavenly Father loves people even when He is not loved by them, thus showing one of the fundamental facets of His love, and, therefore, of the very "I Am," of the very "Being" of God, also showing His attribute of "Father of Mercies" that so essentially needs to be known by every human being.**

*2 Corinthians 1: 3 **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.***

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Although we intend to see later that the fact that God is the "Father of Mercies" does not imply that God tolerates sin in the sense of being conniving with it, we see that the attribute of God, in His condition as Father of Mercies, is so sublime and broad that even though people have subjected themselves to sin, iniquity, and darkness, God, by His mercy, continues to extend opportunities for forgiveness, salvation, and reconciliation with Him to the people in the world to the point that the Lord's mercy can prevail over the condemnatory judgment.

*James 2: 13 **For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.***

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Furthermore, **it is very significant to see that the Scriptures teach us that God's benignity or kindness goes hand in hand with mercy, for one of the**

sublime aspects of the word *kindness (or benignity)* is that it is composed of the words *goodness* and *integrity*. That is, kindness or benignity is a goodness that always acts in integrity and righteousness, showing us that mercy is also broadly kind, compassionate, and clothed in longsuffering, but without ever acting contrary to what is upright and righteous, just as the Father of Lights is righteous.

Thus, it is precisely because God's mercy can bestow compassion with integrity and righteousness that it triumphs over judgment. If God's mercy were not perfect and just, it, ultimately, would also have to be condemned along with its "Father."

As we have already mentioned above, if God were not merciful in His integrity and righteousness, the entire human race would already be completely extinct. God, however, is not only merciful, but He is the "Father of Mercies." And in His mercy, the Lord offered and continues to offer, in Christ Jesus, His offer of justification, redemption, and salvation to all human beings in the present world so that everyone who believes in Christ may receive eternal life.

It is because of God's mercy, which aims to offer eternal salvation and the knowledge of God's glory to every individual, that the present world is still sustained. And because the world, as we know it at present, is still supported by God in His attribute of the Father of Mercies, people should not be frivolous and negligent in understanding and accepting the Lord's mercy towards them.

- 1 Timothy 2: 1* ***Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,***  
***2 for kings and all who are in authority (or eminence), that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.***  
***3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,***  
***4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.***  
***5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,***  
***6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.***

*Psalms 103: 8* ***The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.***

- 2 Peter 3: 1* ***Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),***  
***2 that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,***  
***3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,***  
***4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."***  
***5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,***

- 6 **by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.**
- 7 **But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.**
- 8 **But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.**
- 9 **The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**
- 10 **But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.**
- 11 **Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,**
- 12 **looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?**
- 

Therefore, under the ignorance or contempt regarding the mercy of God offered to them by the Heavenly Father, people do not understand that they no longer need to perish because of the sins and iniquities they committed.

Ignoring or despising the condition that God in His glory is also the Father of Mercy towards every human being is, then, one of the main reasons why people begin to open the door of their hearts or minds to question the righteousness of God and for not seeing that it is their own unbelief that keeps them away from the relationship with the Lord and not the merciful love of God.

- John 3: 16* ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.***
- 17 ***For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.***
- 18 ***He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.***

- Hebrews 3: 12* ***Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;***
- 13 ***but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.***
- 

Disassociated from understanding and accepting the work of God's mercy towards them, many want to attribute injustices to God instead of acknowledging their unrighteousness before the Lord so that, through His mercy, they may be forgiven and reconciled with their Eternal Creator.

*Romans 2: 4 **Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?***

*2 Thessalonians 2: 10 ... **and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.***

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We recall here, then, that, **in Christ Jesus, God did not come into the world in the flesh to condemn people. On the contrary, Christ came to offer human beings their redemption from sin and eternal condemnation because of their subjection to sin and darkness, revealing His incomparable and unparalleled joint work with the Father of Love and Mercy.**

Moreover, **in His condition as the Father of Mercies, God, the Creator of everything and everyone, who is above all creation and who owes absolutely nothing to anyone, not only offers His mercy, compassion, goodness, and kindness in Christ Jesus to every human being but still, despite being the Almighty God, even “pleads,” or “makes supplications” to us so that we may be reconciled with Him.**

*2 Corinthians 5: 17 **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.***

*18 **Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,***  
*19 **that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.***

*20 **Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.***

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So, considering that God is the Father of all mercy and of all true consolation or comfort for eternal life, where else could a person find mercy by keeping oneself resistant to God and away from the Father of goodness and eternal life?

**It is in God's mercy in bestowing His Son Christ Jesus as the perfect sacrifice and way of salvation and newness of life that a person attains all that one needs for eternal life under God's mercy even though one previously subjected oneself to sin and darkness.**

Nevertheless, **if a person rejects the mercy of God, revealed to the world above all in Christ Jesus, one rejects the Father of all mercy that can provide forgiveness, redemption, and eternal salvation to an individual.**



**Christ is the eternal truth, Christ is the good gift of God's salvation, but Christ is also the evident and essential expression of the mercy of the Father of Mercies towards us.**

Christ endured, to the uttermost extreme, the chastisement and the pain that should come upon us so that in Him, in the mercy of the Heavenly Father, we could be saved and redeemed from life apart from our Eternal Creator.

*Isaiah 53: 5 **But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.***

There is no human pain, affliction, or anguish greater than that which Christ suffered “because of God's mercy towards us,” for He bore the sum of all the pains, afflictions, and anguish of all human beings, including those who did not acknowledge Him as the Lord or still do not acknowledge His Lordship.

The suffering of Christ, because of mercy for every individual in the world and also the sum of what all the individuals in the world have done, cannot be compared with any other pain endured by any other human being.

Because of the love of the Father of Mercies for us, the Father gave us the Son of His Love also as the Perfect Son of Man who bore the shame and pain of all human beings to show us that we have in the Lord the saving mercy that is offered to be known and received by all.

And if this were not enough, it is also the Father of Mercies who establishes Christ Jesus as the Eternal High Priest, according to the Order of Melchizedek, to assist each person who, through Him, comes to God and His throne of grace.

*Hebrews 4: 13 **And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.***

*14 **Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.***

*15 **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.***

*16 **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

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**God created people to live in Him, and even if they have turned away from the Lord, He, by His mercy, invites them to return to the place of life for which they were created in heavenly love.** Aspects repeatedly reaffirmed in the Scriptures, and concerning which we recall below, once again, some texts that express central points of the extent of the love and mercy of the Father of Mercies:

*Romans 5: 8 **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

**9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.**

**10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**

**11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.**

*Romans 3: 9* **What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.**

**10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;**

**11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.**

**12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."**

**13 "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips";**

**14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."**

**15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;**

**16 Destruction and misery are in their ways;**

**17 And the way of peace they have not known."**

**18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."**

**19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.**

**20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

**21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,**

**22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;**

**23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

**24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,**

**25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,**

**26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**

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In Christ Jesus, God reiterated that He is the Unique Creator of the Heavens and the Earth and all that is in them, that He has entire dominion over all creation, and that He is the Father of Lights who can enlighten people in the deepest darkness, but also that He is the God of Mercies by which He pardons all those who receive His invitation to salvation and fellowship with Him.

*Psalms 145: 9* **The LORD is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works.**

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Finally, returning to the point concerning which some people claim that mercy seems devoid of logic, we would like to highlight here that it is precisely under the logic of mercy provided by the Father of Mercies that every human being can be saved. And this applies even to those who think or advocate that mercy is not logical, is not based on the irreproachable righteousness of God, or even believe that one can be justified before the Lord by some kind of external code of conduct similar to what was the Law of Moses, which, however, has already been revoked before God because of its weakness and unprofitableness.

Thus, **God announces His glory to the world also with the attribute of being the Father of Mercies so that everyone knows that despite the past they may have had, they are invited to approach Him for salvation and eternal newness of life if they are willing to receive Christ as Lord in their lives.**

*Joel 2: 13 **So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.***

*Proverbs 16: 6 **In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.***

*Proverbs 28: 13 **He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.***

*Romans 11: 32 **For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.***

*33 **Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!***

*34 **"For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?"***

*35 **"Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?"***

*36 **For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.***

*Hebrews 7: 18 **For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, 19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.***

*Titus 3: 3 **For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.***

- 4 *But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,*  
 5 *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,*  
 6 *whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,*  
 7 *that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

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In God's logic, there is no way for a Father of Mercies not to be full and overflowing with mercies towards those who need it and are willing to receive God's love towards them.

*Psalms 86: 15* ***But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.***

- Psalms 103:1* ***Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!***  
 2 ***Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:***  
 3 ***Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,***  
 4 ***Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,***  
 5 ***Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.***  
 6 ***The LORD executes righteousness And justice for all who are oppressed.***  
 7 ***He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.***  
 8 ***The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.***  
 9 ***He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever.***  
 10 ***He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.***  
 11 ***For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;***  
 12 ***As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.***  
 13 ***As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him.***  
 14 ***For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.***  
 15 ***As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.***  
 16 ***For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more.***  
 17 ***But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children,***  
 18 ***To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them.***

- 19 The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.*
- 20 Bless the LORD, you His angels, Who excel in strength, who do His word, Heeding the voice of His word.*
- 21 Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You ministers of His, who do His pleasure.*
- 22 Bless the LORD, all His works, In all places of His dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!*

### C3. Paul: An Example with a Special Highlight on the Comprehensiveness of God's Mercy

In the Lord's Scriptures, we find many descriptions of occasions when people appealed to God's mercy in times of need and affliction and which were promptly answered by the Lord, as well as we can also see occasions when the Lord took the initiative and showed His compassion to the needy even though they were not even aware enough to cry out for it, as exemplified in the texts below, sometimes translated with the word *mercy*, sometimes with the word *compassion*:

*Matthew 20: 30* **And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!"**

*Matthew 9: 36* **But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.**

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People from all social classes and in different circumstances approached Christ to receive mercy from Him, just as Christ went to towns and villages to show them God's compassion for their lives. Poor, blind, sick, tax collectors, harlots, military, rulers, and even several religious leaders sought the Lord to obtain mercy for their lives or those close to them.

Each example narrated in the word of the Lord is worthy of being read and observed carefully, for, in reality, they are like mirrors of our condition as human beings and the similar needs that each individual in the world has of God's love and compassion.

Nevertheless, among so many examples, there is one in particular with some peculiar or distinct characteristics or highlights, which is the example of Saul, also called Paul. After Saul had an encounter with the Lord's mercy and experienced profound changes for his entire existence, his life also became one of the most notorious examples of the breadth or comprehensiveness of the Heavenly Father's mercy regarding the salvation of sinners.

**And the fact that we highlight Saul's example at this point does not refer to some special virtue that he had or that made him particularly worthy of a measure of grace and mercy differentiated from others. On the contrary, we highlight Saul's example because of his accentuated condition as a sinner in which he lived before coming to know Christ personally.**

The example of Saul or Paul is also peculiar because he, despite being an accentuated sinner, lived in a condition where he did not "seem" to be a sinner, or at least not as sinful as other ordinary men. Instead, he "appeared" to be a man who was dedicated to the very One Eternal God and Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Due to his unblemished conduct regarding the law and morals of his people, Saul was a man who "apparently" was not much in need of God's mercy. He was a healthy man, very successful in human society, vigorous, and very dedicated to what he did.

Saul was a meticulous observer of the Law of Moses and was considered irreproachable in the observance of this law.

In his own eyes and the eyes of his people, Saul was an exponent among exponents. And according to the glory of flesh and men, Saul could be considered a reference for various exaltations and glories, as he himself mentions in the following text:

*Philippians 3: 4 **Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.***

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Nevertheless, this same Saul, in the eyes of God, was a man who was wrong in the most fundamental aspects of what he believed. And as a result, God also had a reproachful appraisal of the various works that Saul did.

In his own eyes and the eyes of those who guided him, Saul was a model of dedication to God. However, in the eyes of the Lord, he was a man in dire need of Heaven's mercy. Saul was a man who urgently needed God's mercy, for under his intense zeal, thinking he was serving God, he was surrendering himself more and more to the practice of terrible sins against the people of his generation and also in opposition to the Lord Himself.

Humanly speaking, Saul was a man of vision and passion, committed, intense, and insightful about the vision he was committed to. However, he did not see what many weak and debilitated people in society saw, namely: The urgent need to receive God's indispensable mercy in his personal life.

Saul was a well-trained man with sharp vision and intellect, and he knew more than one language, including Greek. Furthermore, he had Roman citizenship by birthright and Jewish citizenship by descent from the tribe of Benjamin and the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, before the Lord, Saul was blind in understanding and discernment regarding the true kingdom of God, himself, the faith of his fellow men, and the true provision of love and salvation of the Lord for humanity.

In the book of Acts, especially in chapters 7 to 9, we can observe a narrative by Luke about who this Saul was, also called Paul, who later became an apostle of Christ.

And later, in Paul's letters to his fellow believers of faith in Christ, he himself also describes who he was before having an encounter with God's mercy, revealing, in profound detail, who was Saul who so sharply persecuted Christians and who even thought he was doing God's will with this attitude, as follows:

*1 Timothy 1: 12 **And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, 13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.***

- 15 *This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*  
 16 *However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.*  
 17 *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

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The Saul that was considered great in his own eyes and the eyes of the great of his people, when he still did not personally know Christ, described later by himself, was:

- ⇒ 1) A blasphemer;
- ⇒ 2) A persecutor;
- ⇒ 3) An insolent man;
- ⇒ 4) Ignorant;
- ⇒ 5) Unbeliever;
- ⇒ 6) The chief or principal of sinners;
- ⇒ 7) An example or pattern of a sinner in dire need of God's mercy and perfect longsuffering in Christ Jesus.

And so that there should not be any doubt as to how sinful he was, or for people not to consider that he was speaking figuratively, Paul goes on to say that the word he was speaking was ***a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.***

Let us then consider here a little more about the adjectives Paul used to refer to who he was when he had not yet received Christ as Lord in his heart.

First, as a blasphemer, Saul spoke what was improper. With his words, Saul communicated what was evil.

Saul intensely propagated the Law of Moses and required people to abide by it. However, after Christ died on the cross of Calvary and rose from the dead, this was a propagation of the attempt to maintain something that had become obsolete before God. It was the propagation of a religious system that could never save a person and that, according to the Scriptures themselves, had its validity declared as revoked with the fulfillment of the ancient law by Christ Jesus so that, when it became revoked, the New Covenant would be introduced. The New Covenant that is founded on superior and better promises, and that is revealed and offered by God to bring redemption to all and to free even those previously subject to the Law of Moses.

What Saul was propagating was something sharply opposed to the work of Christ and the New Covenant because it had “a form of godliness” but was “feigned humility” with no possibility of providing eternal salvation and the newness of God's life in those who were under this “outward or seeming piety.”

Saul was also blasphemous because he boasted about fulfilling a law that discriminated against people in his society who were naturally not perfect as he was and who could not even approach the temple. And what was the fault of a blind person or one born debilitated for not being able to enter the temple and fulfill the law? What



had Saul done for himself to not have been born blind or debilitated to boast of his unique natural, social, and intellectual conditions?

Paul himself said that he had been a blasphemer. He himself said that he was not a good person who did good deeds. It was not other people who said it, but he himself openly exposed the testimony about his conduct in former times.

Still in his ardor as a blasphemer, Saul spoke badly of faith in Christ and the true faith for salvation and eternal life by the grace of God.

And this not being enough, Saul became an active and intense persecutor of those who believed in the true Way of God, in the Christ of the Lord, in the Messiah who came to bring salvation by the grace of God.

*Acts 9: 1 **Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ...***

Saul became so involved with his zeal against the Christians and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Anointed of God, that he reached the point of “breathing,” “filling his lungs,” or “inhaling” a desire for threats and death to those who believed in the Lord, many of whom were his countrymen and, who knows, perhaps even his relatives.

Those who breathe threats and murder against their fellow men might even be subject to being equated with those who plot evil on their own beds.

*Psalms 36: 4 **He devises wickedness on his bed; He sets himself in a way that is not good; He does not abhor evil.***

In his supposed zeal for the Lord, Saul adopted the postures of a dictator and a murderer, saying he was doing what he was doing “in the name of God, Creator of Heaven and Earth.” On his battle flag, he carried the name of God, but in his heart, he carried oppression and breathed threats, imposing fear and death on people, as Paul also testifies in another passage of the Scriptures:

*Acts 26: 9 **Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.***

***10 This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.***

***11 And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.***

***12 While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, ...”***

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Saul's excessive rage led him to adopt the attitude of an “insolent man,” as we are told in the English translation.

Now, the terms *insolent*, *insolence*, or the expression to be *insolent* have the following connotations in the considerations associated in the Online Bible with Strong's lexicon:

*Insolent:*

- 1) *An insolent individual, resentful, malicious, vindictive, harmful, dangerous, noxious;*
- 2) *One who, uplifted with pride, either heaps insulting language upon others or does them some shameful act of wrong.*

*To be insolent:*

- 1) *To behave insolently, wantonly, outrageously;*
- 2) *To act insolently and shamefully towards one, to treat shamefully;*
- 3) *Of one who injures another by speaking evil of him.*

*Insolence:*

- 1) *Impudence, pride, haughtiness;*
- 2) *A wrong springing from insolence, an injury, affront, insult;*
- 3) *Mental injury and wantonness of its infliction being prominent;*
- 4) ***Injury inflicted by the violence of a tempest.***

Saul was a religious man who acted with the authorization of the laws and with respect for the rulers of his nation, but he was proud, cruel, impetuous, arrogant, and abusive.

Wherever Saul went, he “afflicted the people like a violent and destructive storm.” Wherever Saul passed, he “sought to devastate Christians' lives.” And this, under the banner of serving God.

According to the law of his nation, as already mentioned, Saul was considered irreproachable and fully supported by the laws of his people. Saul was “insolent according to the law.” Saul supported the persecution and death of Christians supported by laws in force in the governance of his people or under orders that his leaders bestowed on him.

Saul could not be accused by any of his people nor be condemned by human courts, since what he did was according to the “commission” he had received from people in government positions superior to him.

Saul was well-regarded and respected by his country's ruling classes. And the rulers certainly had big plans to be carried out through this “brilliant man” in their eyes.

And could a man who has achieved so many aspects of human success, and this according to the laws prevailing in his society, still be extremely in need of mercy?

Nevertheless, in his own words, Paul writes that he was chief or principal among sinners in need of God's mercy. And he does not write this for poetic effect but because it is the expression of truth. Saul was a man who was immersed in very deep darkness and surrendering himself more and more to them. This was Paul's testimony about the man he was before he knew the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Heavenly Father.

When we also look at the book of Psalms, we see that one of the psalmists expresses a prayer to God to be protected from what Saul strongly indulged in and which is so exalted by many people, but not before the Lord, namely:

*Psalms 19: 13 **Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins (or from pride); Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression.***

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An insolent individual expresses a person who has surrendered to pride. He is a person who has subjected oneself to arrogance. An insolent individual is a person who thinks one is in control of all things and does not see that one is subject to pride. And especially sad is the bondage to this evil present in the world and that tries to corrupt the righteous ways of life.

*1 John 2: 16 **For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.***

*Proverbs 16: 18 **Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.***

*Proverbs 21: 4 **A haughty look, a proud heart, And the plowing of the wicked are sin.***

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A highly significant aspect of Paul's testimony, specifically about the time when he had not yet personally known Christ as his Lord, is that he did not cover up who he was in this period.

As a devout follower of the Law of Moses, Saul was not an adulterous man, did not act dishonestly towards other people, was not doubtful in the sense of faltering between two opinions, was not incoherent, and there was nothing that would discredit him in the eyes of his peers. But still, within him, he harbored insolence for a cause intensely contrary to the Eternal Lord.

Saul followed the rules and devotedly served the causes he was dedicated to and showed no intention of being fraudulent in what he did. However, even so, he was subject to dense darkness and thinking he was truly serving God precisely because he was following the external rules and the dedication to the causes with which he had so committed himself.

In reality, all human beings equally need mercy, but woe to those who think they do not need it, for they do not see their real condition and the need for help. And for this reason, they render themselves to the practice of such expressive and profound evils that are not committed even by many of those considered the most exponent types of vile sinners in a society.

Nevertheless, **when Christ, because of God's mercy to Saul, showed him such brightness of His glorious light that Saul's natural eyes were blinded, Saul, under the temporary condition of natural blindness, saw more than he had ever seen before in his entire life.**

With his natural eyes blinded for a period, Saul began to lean his ears to what he had never been willing to hear before. Despite his blinded eyes, Saul saw that what he had dedicated himself to and what he had practiced for so many years was dense darkness, as well as he saw that what he was chasing, thinking it was deep darkness and deceit, was the true Light that came from the Father of Lights, from the Father of Mercies and the Father of All Comfort.

It was necessary for Saul to become temporarily blind to the natural and surrounding world for him, for the first time, listening attentively to the voice of the One who had come into the world to die for him and to extend to him the Heavenly Father's mercy despite all his intense practice of sins and iniquities.

In Saul's case, being led to falling to the ground, or losing his way in life to find it again in Christ, was the expression of an action of the loving and forgiving power that only exists in the mercy of the Heavenly Father.

- Acts 9: 1* ***Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest***  
***2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.***  
***3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.***  
***4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"***  
***5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."***  
***6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."***  
***7 And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.***  
***8 Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.***

- Philippians 3: 7* ***But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.***  
***8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ***  
***9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;***  
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In his condition prior to becoming a Christian, Saul, before the men of his generation, was a successful and resolute man, and a model of morals and ethics to be observed and followed. However, before God, he was a persecutor of God Himself.

When Saul, so full of men's sense of righteousness, persecuted Christians, it was Christ he was persecuting. It was the Only Begotten and Beloved Son given to us by God's mercy, love, and grace that he was persecuting.

Therefore, Saul was a sinner who had a beautiful appearance of a holy and righteous man and who thought he was acting correctly or in righteousness. However, in this same Saul, we can see that human grandeur, morals, and righteousness can deeply deceive people who surrender to them, for before God, they do not work for a person to be recognized before Him.

***Luke 16: 15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God."***

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In the face of what we saw above, and aware of who he was when he had not yet received God's mercy in his heart, Paul also declares the following words concerning many of the group that he had previously so intensely been part of:

***Romans 10: 1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.***

***2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.***

***3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.***

***4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.***

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We can see here, then, that a person's "intention and zeal of the heart to want to please God," and "one's external works according to the rules of external laws," do not justify this individual before God. Instead, what justifies a person before the Lord is one's justification by the grace of the Lord through Christ and which can be received through faith in the Lord, for only the latter is based on God's mercy towards human beings and not on their works. (A point specifically and widely addressed in the themes The Gospel of God's Righteousness, The Gospel of Salvation, and The Gospel of God's Grace).

After receiving Christ into his heart, Paul, at no time, seeks to say that he was a "good man" before personally knowing his Eternal Lord. On the contrary, after his personal encounter with Christ, Paul explicitly declares that ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and that he himself was the principal of all sinners and, therefore, so in need of the Lord's mercy.

***Romans 3: 19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.***

***20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.***

21 ***But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed,  
 being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,  
 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all  
 and on all who believe. For there is no difference;  
 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,  
 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is  
 in Christ Jesus,  
 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith,  
 to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God  
 had passed over the sins that were previously committed,  
 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He  
 might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.***

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The purpose of Paul's testimony about his life was never a denial that he was a sinner or an attempt to hide or soften who he had been in the past. Inspired by the Spirit of the Lord to be recorded in the Scriptures, Paul's testimony was given to us to show that although he was a sinner who advanced into such intense submission to sin and iniquity, this was no impediment to God's love and mercy to reach him and offer him forgiveness, justification, and eternal salvation in the Lord.

Religiosity, title, position in the religious environment, and religious practices, even if authorized by the laws of a nation, do not justify anyone before God. On the contrary, in many cases, these are the things that serve as food or fuel for haughtiness, self-exaltation, contempt for others, and a position of arrogance and pride before God and other people, as exemplified below also by a parable presented directly by the Lord Jesus Christ:

*Luke 18: 9 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in  
 themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:*  
 10 ***"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the  
 other a tax collector.  
 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank  
 You that I am not like other men, — extortioners, unjust,  
 adulterers, or even as this tax collector.  
 12 'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'  
 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as  
 raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be  
 merciful to me a sinner!'  
 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than  
 the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he  
 who humbles himself will be exalted."***

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Thus, when Saul saw that he was a sinner, and accepted the mercy that enlightened his understanding and provided him with eternal forgiveness, he abandoned his religious pride and embraced the grace and goodness extended to him by the Lord Jesus Christ and allowed the Lord to save him and deliver him from the dense darkness to which he had been subject for several years.

When the proud Saul was humbled, he saw that it was a work of God's mercy, and by it, he also chose to remain in a humble position. And for this, later and appropriately, Saul was exalted by God and not according to men.

***1 Timothy 1: 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.***  
***17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.***

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After knowing Christ, Saul, at no time, showed pride of his former condition as a sinner, but he rejoiced greatly in the mercy that the Lord showed him.

In this way, **by the mercy extended to a blasphemous, ignorant, unbelieving, persecuting, and indolent man like Saul, the Lord Jesus and the Heavenly Father were also exalted so that this model serves as a reference or light to the world. And this, so that every individual who sees oneself as a sinner may have, similarly to Saul, hope and open one's heart to God to receive from the Lord Jesus Christ the same powerful heavenly mercy.**

Before having an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, Saul was not a man who did good works, nor was he an example to be imitated. And it is also for this reason that his redemption serves as a pattern for all, and even for those who insolently and directly opposed Christ or His people, so that they may know that the Lord's forgiving mercy is also available to them in God by His eternal grace and through faith in this heavenly grace.

**God's mercy, as well as what it operates in the life of a person who receives it, is greater than an individual's entire past. A point that God exemplified to us in the mercy extended to Paul, who presented himself to the world as the chief sinner redeemed by the Lord's grace.**

**Therefore, the Lord's mercy exalts the power of redemption and restoration of lives that is in God regardless of how far from the truth or directly contrary to it a person has walked.**

Finally, after having been reached by mercy and having received it in his heart, we understand that Paul would certainly also agree with the following words of the Psalmist:

***Psalms 25: 6 Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses, For they are from of old.***  
***7 Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; According to Your mercy remember me, For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.***  
***8 Good and upright is the LORD; Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.***  
***9 The humble He guides in justice, And the humble He teaches His way.***  
***10 All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.***

- 11 For Your name's sake, O LORD, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.**  
**12 Who is the man that fears the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses.**

----

Still in his own writings, after being justified, forgiven, saved, comforted, and strengthened by the Lord, and no longer by his own natural or carnal strength, Paul writes the words below as this also being his own growing experience with God's mercy:

- Romans 5: 8* **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**  
**9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.**  
**10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**  
**11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.**

----

Redeemed by God's mercy and raised by God's grace, Paul, who presented himself to us as the chief sinner, could come to live and walk in the novelty of life according to God's good, acceptable, and perfect will.

So, may this example of the action of God's mercy towards Paul continue to cooperate in encouraging many to open their hearts to the Lord as well, so that from Him, likewise, they may receive mercy upon mercy according to the riches of God's glory and that people, also of the present and future generations, may have the eyes of understanding enlightened to know personally the power of triumph which the mercy of God can have in their own lives.

*Psalms 51: 1* **Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.**

*Psalms 119: 41* **Let Your mercies come also to me, O LORD, Your salvation according to Your word.**



## C4. Love for God's Mercy

**Loving God and longing to do His will also encompasses wanting to love God's mercy**, as we can see in the following text:

*Micah 6: 8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but:*

**(1) to do justly (or to practice righteousness),  
(2) To love mercy,  
And (3) to walk humbly with your God?**

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As for the first aspect mentioned in the text above of the prophet Micah, we know that the central expression of God's righteousness towards us is the Lord Jesus Christ and His redemptive work, and that practicing the righteousness of God begins with the aspect of believing in Christ Jesus as the Lord for our justification. (A subject addressed in more detail under the theme of The Gospel of the Righteousness of God.)

As for the third aspect, which is walking humbly with God, we know that grace is granted by the Lord to those who humble themselves before Him because they know that they are creatures and that only God is Lord over all the creation, but also because they have the Lord Jesus Christ as the model of what a gentle and humble heart is, and whom we are called to follow. (A subject covered more extensively by the topics of the chapter Living and Walking in Christ of the theme of The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ and throughout the Walking in Newness of Life series.)

In this chapter, therefore, we want to dwell a little more on the second point exposed in the text of the prophet Micah mentioned above, which refers to the expression **to love mercy**.

Thus, the love towards mercy or to love mercy is an attitude or posture of life that the Lord asks us to do, as well as a practical action that is good or for the benefit of the one who practices it.

If we also look at other parts of the Scriptures regarding the practice of love for mercy, we can see that it encompasses, among others, at least two very specific directions that complement each other or intertwine, that is:

- ⇒ **The first sense of love towards mercy is related to each person's need for God's mercy towards oneself**, as we saw in several texts in the previous chapter.
- ⇒ **The second direction of the practice of love for mercy is related to the need that each person has to practice mercy towards their fellow men**, as exemplified in the following text:

*Luke 6: 36 "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."*

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**Undoubtedly, one of the great benefits of a person being merciful towards others is that it continually reminds this individual of how much**

**one already needed and continues to need God's mercy in each new day and every moment of it.**

Returning to the matter of practicing righteousness and walking humbly with God, we understand that a more comprehensive understanding of mercy and love for it also cooperates in sustaining the three practices of life mentioned by Micah and that the Lord asks to be adopted personally by all human beings for their own benefit.

The human being is continually surrounded by the danger of starting to think that one is superior to others because of the acts one performs, especially if one “achieves some material successes,” for under this attitude, people tend to distance themselves from the love of mercy, which, in turn, works to turn them away from practicing righteousness and walking humbly with their One Creator and Lord.

For this reason or our own good, it should be noted that **the Lord does not instruct us to cherish and desire His mercy only at some times, but He instructs us “to love His mercy.”**

**And love for someone or something implies honoring, establishing attachment, and having an intense and continuous dedication to whom or what one loves.**

In this way, **to love mercy means having a high esteem for it and valuing it greatly in every moment of life. Love for God's mercy recognizes, exalts, places in inestimable value, and continually glorifies this precious and essential virtue of the Heavenly Father.**

*Jeremiah 9: 23 Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;*

*24 But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness (or mercy), judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.*

*Psalms 115: 1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth.*

*Psalms 136: 26 Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever.*

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**To love God's mercy is to love God, for He is merciful. And certainly, to love mercy is to love what the Heavenly Father Himself loves and is delighted with.**

Furthermore, to love the mercy of God is to love being close to the Heavenly Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Father of Mercies is the one who brings to light His mercies for us and through us, and the love for God's mercy keeps us aware of how important we are to the Heavenly Father, how much He loves us, how much He wants to be with us, and how much He wants our good.

The practice of loving God's mercy cooperates to continually remember how much the Heavenly Father loves His creation and how close He approached it to share His love with it.

To love mercy keeps us aware of our fragile and feeble condition as mere human beings when we turn away from the One who in love created us, as well as keeps us aware of how impossible it is for a human being to provide for one's own salvation by the works one does.

Therefore, **just as the Lord's mercies have no end or fail not, so God's mercy is an inexhaustible source of goodness and life to be loved and experienced more and more every day of our lives.**

**And for those who want to love mercy, there is a specific address where it should be found, namely: The throne of grace or the Lord Jesus Christ.** (A point addressed in more detail in the theme of The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ).

*Hebrews 4: 13 **And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.***

*14 **Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.***

*15 **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.***

*16 **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

*Jude 1: 21 **Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.***

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And if we return once more to the second specific aspect mentioned above about what encompasses loving God's mercy, we may see that when one loves another, one may also have a longing and love to practice what one's beloved loves.

In this way, **the love for God's mercy cooperates for us to see how much the Heavenly Father, in His righteousness, is also, at the same time, longsuffering, compassionate, benign, or merciful towards all people and how much He desires that we also treat others with the mercy we receive as the fruit of heavenly love.**

**Since mercy is the fruit of God's constant love and that the Lord, through the Holy Spirit bestowed on His children, pours His love into their hearts, it is also to be expected that the children of God, called in love to love others, manifest the mercy received in the sense of practicing it towards other people.**

*Ephesians 5: 1 **Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.***

***2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.***

***Colossians 3: 12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;***

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To love God, therefore, encompasses practicing a longing clearly declared by the Heavenly Father and reaffirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ, which is to love God's mercy towards us and to act through it towards others, as also exemplified in the following texts:

***Hosea 6: 6 "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."***

***Matthew 9: 13 "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."***

***Matthew 12: 7 "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless."***

----

Multitudes of sacrifices, efforts, works, donations, and so on cannot replace the practice of loving God's mercy, in the sense of opening the heart to receive it, but also to work through it, for mercy, expressed by various virtues of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, is a part and expression of the very love of God.

***1 Corinthians 13: 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.***

Thus, to love mercy encompasses becoming intimate with it and learning about it, to the point of also wanting to cultivate it and practice it according to the same love on which it is based.

God's will for each of His children is that they love mercy to the point of being merciful as their Heavenly Father is, which, in turn, can result in blessings and joy by following the example of Him who called them to be His children and also because this generates a continuous cycle of the outpouring of mercy as one of the primary expressions of God's love.

***Luke 6: 36 "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."***

*Matthew 5: 7 **Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.***

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The one who becomes merciful in Christ is a person who comes to know and practice one of the central aspects of one's condition as a new creature. One is an individual who comes to live and walk according to one of the essential aspects of the wisdom and strength given from above, coming to be also in a growing position of being the object of the Lord's mercy towards one's own life.

*Galatians 6: 14 **But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.***

*15 **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.***

*16 **And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.***

*1 Peter 2: 9 **But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;***

*10 **who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.***

*James 3: 17 **But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.***

*Proverbs 19: 22(a) **What is desired in a man is kindness (or mercy).***

## C5. Is God's Mercy Conditional or Unconditional?

Over the years, some terms in the language of a people may receive greater weight than in past times. For example, we can see more frequent use of the terms *conditional* or *unconditional* today than in the times when the Scriptures or the texts of the Bible were originally written.

These terms *conditional* or *unconditional* even are not used in any part of the Scriptures.

Due to the excessive desire to define some aspects of life in compact, concise, and in more contemporary language sentences, people often run the risk of restricting the definition of an older term, distorting its concept, or trying to add some modernity of language to it that does not apply to it indeed.

So, regarding the terms mentioned above, is the love of God, and the part of the mercy of this love, conditional or unconditional?

In other words: Is God's love (and the mercy that is in it) towards human beings subject to some pre-established conditions that need to be met (is it conditional) or is God's love (and His mercy in it) towards human beings not subject to any condition (is it unconditional)?

In turn, the answer to this last question is not as simple as some want to frame it in contemporary times, as it is a question that perhaps cannot be answered with a mere option for one or another aspect exposed in it.

Under the theme Colligated or Associated Words and Riddles of Antiquity, we saw that the path to understanding the word of God is often associated with returning to concepts as they were defined in antiquity and not necessarily in the attempts to adapt the Scriptures to human modernity.

God always was, continues to be, and will always be love and full of mercy, for in Him, there is no shadow of variation. In this way, looking at the unconditional aspect, the existence of love and mercy does not depend on any other conditions or actions on the part of human beings.

If we consider the fact that the Lord is Eternal and unchangeable, and consequently also His attributes, and if we insist on analyzing the matter of God's attributes under the use of the terms *conditional* or *unconditional*, we could say, then, that God's love and mercy are not subject to the volatile conditions of human beings, as exemplified below:

*Lamentations 3: 22* ***Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions (or mercies) fail not (or do not end).***

*Psalms 118: 1* ***Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.***

Nevertheless, if we look at the aspect of carrying out or exercising mercy as it is described in the Scriptures, we can observe that the release of mercy's working toward

people occurs both in the form called by some unconditional and in the conditional way.

As we have already mentioned, God has always been, is, and will be merciful. However, there are situations or conditions where His mercy is not released to people who need it.

In the account of the posture of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary, we can notice a situation in which there is a release of God's mercy that, perhaps, we could call unconditional, as follows:

*Luke 23: 33 **And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.***

*34 **Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots."***

On the cross of Calvary, regardless of what people were doing to Jesus, the Lord prayed for God's forgiveness for those who were crucifying Him or who had any part in this event.

On the other hand, even in the specific situation mentioned above, we can see that the Lord Jesus took into account a condition of ignorance on the part of those who were practicing or supporting the act of His crucifixion.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Paul reports that he was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent towards Christ and Christians, but he also says, in the same text, that he himself was ignorant and skeptical regarding the knowledge of the truth about who indeed the Lord Jesus was.

In this way, once ignorance is removed or there is an opportunity given by the Lord for a person not to remain in ignorance regarding His love and mercy, a part of the release of the work of God's mercy is granted to an individual only under some specific conditions.

Once a person becomes aware or has the possibility of becoming aware of the need for the Lord's mercy towards one's life and that mercy is freely available in the Lord, but one still rejects it, the condition of mercy's liberation towards this individual changes drastically.

God's mercies have no end, fail not, or its work is perfect. However, this does not mean that they can be continually neglected without a person suffering consequences for not having opened one's heart to receive the Lord's mercies.

The fountain of mercy will never run out of mercy. This eventually might be called as unconditional or an unchangeable condition. However, a person can despise God's mercies no matter how abundant they are, for recognizing the need for mercy also implies recognizing the need to receive it for a change in the life of the one who receives it.

**God's mercy is an inexhaustible source of God's goodness. However, contempt for it and a deliberate inclination to sin can restrict a person from accessing or receiving it. And this, in turn, shows a largely conditional condition of the Lord's bestowal of mercy.**

Therefore, **God's mercy is not some kind of ticket that gives a person a free pass to indulge in sin or that the Lord, in His mercy, will not take into account this type of decision made by an individual. God hates sin and evil, and He will not be complicit in people's choices for darkness, sins, or iniquities**, as often is mentioned in the Scriptures and exemplified by some texts below:

*Romans 5: 20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound.*

*But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,*

*21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*6: 1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*

*2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*

*3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*

*4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

...

*16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?*

...

*22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*

*23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*Hebrews 10: 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?*

*1 John 2: 1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

*2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

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Never should a person confuse God's mercy with the idea that the Lord would supposedly endorse a person becoming an accomplice of sin or choosing to live subject to iniquities.

God's mercy is highly related to the forgiveness of sins, but this does not mean that it becomes an incentive to the practice of sin. God is not conniving with any sin.



Even though the Lord offers His mercy to all sinners, we see in the Scriptures several reports in which the Lord Jesus Christ warns forgiven sinners not to be frivolous with the life of sin they practiced before the encounter with Him, warning them to walk in the fear of the Lord and no longer according to the conduct they adopted before obtaining salvation in God. Below are two specific examples:

- John 8: 1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.*
- 2 Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.*
- 3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,*
- 4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.*
- 5 Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"*
- 6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.*
- 7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."*
- 8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.*
- 9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*
- 10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"*
- 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."*

- John 5: 12 Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'"*
- 13 But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place.*
- 14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."*
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Thus, when God instructs a person not to sin, He is also acting in mercy and is not punishing or placing restrictions to harm them.

Sin is evil, produces a bad harvest, and, mainly, hardens people's hearts toward goodness, mercy, and the other attributes of the heavenly kingdom. Therefore, the Lord directs people not to give way to sin. The Lord does it because he always wants the good of people.

For this reason, when a person despises the counsel of Christ and chooses to submit to a life of sin, one, more than committing sin and giving oneself

over to the bondage that accompanies it, despises, first of all, God's goodness, mercy, and instruction to one's life.

*Romans 8: 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

*Romans 8: 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

*Romans 2: 4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

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**A life continually subject to sin does not weaken God's mercy, but it acts to harden the soil of a person's heart concerning recognizing and receiving the Lord's mercy in one's life.**

God's mercy, broadly manifested over all human beings through Christ's sacrifice on the cross of Calvary as the provision of forgiveness of the sins of all humankind, refers to a manifestation of God that is independent of the conditions of acceptance or rejection of the human beings of Christ Jesus in their hearts. Therefore, in this respect, mercy perhaps could be considered unconditional.

Nevertheless, faith in God, faith in His mercy, and the acceptance of this mercy, so that it becomes a broad personal experience, depend on the posture that people adopt in relation to what is offered to them according to the grace of the Lord. In this sense, then, if we still insist on using the terms *conditional* and *unconditional*, God's mercy is conditional.

*Hebrews 6: 7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God;*  
*8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.*

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**God is the Father of Mercies, but people can distance themselves from the relationship with Him by not accepting, in their hearts, the Lord's mercies towards them. People can choose to enter and walk in paths devoid of this mercy, for true mercy only exists in God.**

**And instead of being able to count on God's grace, those who oppose God's goodness may even come across the Lord's resistance towards them.**

*Jonah 2: 8 Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy.*

*James 4: 6 **But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."***

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Given this, we can see that the option for the path that leads people to distance themselves from the relationship with the One who is the only one who can grant true mercy can be a choice with very severe harmful consequences.

While under the idolatrous devotion to the Law of Moses, Saul was a blasphemer, a persecuting and insolent man, and an individual far away in his heart from the mercy of God. Though God's mercy was near him, Saul, because of the blindness or veil that came from his religious devotion, could not see the Lord's mercy and acted without it towards those whom he furiously persecuted.

Nevertheless, when Saul was warned by Christ about his ignorance, he prostrated himself on the ground and accepted the pardoning and redeeming mercy offered to him by the Lord, placing himself in the condition where he could receive an abundance of this mercy throughout his whole life.

After the personal encounter with Christ, Saul could have chosen not to receive God's mercy and insisted on the path of seeking human glory and the values considered high among men, but this would have implied a much more severe distance from the Lord's mercy.

God's mercy, also offered to Saul, was given to him without him having the merit to receive it. Saul had already become an accomplice in several deaths, and even so, the Lord offered his mercy to him. Mercy is the offer of God's goodness for repentance even to those who are "intensely evil."

On the other hand, to remain under the abundant bestowal of the Lord's mercy towards him, Saul renounced the evil he served and all aspects that gave him a high status among men but that were not appropriate before the Lord. That is, Saul renounced the path that would lead him to be a person increasingly resistant or distanced in his heart from heavenly mercy.

In view of this, those who choose to want to be exalted before God by the works they practice according to their own effort and not by the grace and love of God, or seek human glory even with attitudes contrary to the Lord, also place themselves in a position of withdrawal from the fellowship with the mercy of God, for they choose to live by the law of human works, by the law of condemnation, and not by the mercy and grace of the Lord. Thus, in these specific respects, the bestowal of mercy is essentially conditional.

*Galatians 5: 4 **You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.***

*Galatians 3: 10 **For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."***

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Therefore, **on the one hand**, we understand that God's mercy could perhaps be called unconditional, is in God, is inexhaustible, and can only be genuinely granted by God. Truths that cannot be affected or modified by human actions, whatever they might be. **On the other hand**, granting mercy in specific situations, receiving mercy, and accepting mercy are linked to some conditions of conduct of faith in God and humility of the one who needs it.

There are people who want to distort God's truth by claiming that the Lord is not actually opposed to the continuation of their sinful practices because He is a merciful God. However, this is a fallacy, it is false and vain speech, for God's mercy will never corrupt God's righteousness. On the contrary, mercy is also a provision of God to support a worthy life for the one who has been brought out of bondage to sin and darkness.

*Psalms 112: 4 **Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness; He is gracious, and full of compassion (or mercy), and righteous.***

To simply or generally say that God's mercy and love are unconditional is very vague and can be dangerous and even vile, for wherever there is room for the Lord to manifest His incorruptible compassion, there God expresses it, but God will always remain righteous and grounded in His perfect righteousness. God's mercy always works so that God's righteousness and just judgment are kept intact and are never distorted or blemished.

*Psalms 116: 5 **Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful.***

*Psalms 89: 14 **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face.***

*Revelation 15: 3 **They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!"***

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Thus, **God's mercy is not an alibi to justify the permanence of a person or a group of people in the condition of submission to sin.**

It can even happen that a person stumbles and falls several times in what one has already been freed from by the Lord and that God continues to see this individual according to His mercy. However, this is very different from saying that God's mercy agrees with a person remaining in the condition of subjection to sin and that mercy accepts and endorses the person to continue to indulge liberally in sin.

Repeating once more, we understand that it is very significant to understand that the Lord acts in mercy to receive those who have distanced themselves from Him and want to return to fellowship with Him. However, God is never conniving, complicit, complacent, or condescending with sin and iniquity, nor does He guarantee that He will forever keep the way of reconciliation with Him open to those who repeatedly reject Him.

*2 Corinthians 6: 1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.*

*2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

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**No person who rejects mercy on the present day of one's life, at the most opportune time, should postpone receiving it because of the possibility of having guaranteed access to it the next day. If grace in the present day extends the possibility of receiving the Lord's mercy and salvation to a person, it is also in the present day that the option for it should be made.**

Therefore, a person stumbling and falling while one's heart is inclined to live and walk in God's grace and mercy is very different than wanting to manipulate the word of God and claim that the Lord understands one's deliberate inclination to sin. And this second position is already a step further in what the Scriptures call mocking God.

*Psalms 37: 23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.*

*24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.*

*Galatians 6: 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

*8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*

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By God's mercy, Saul was made a new man, renewed in Christ, and who grew abundantly in the new life given to him by the Lord because, in part, he left behind the sin of being legalistic or religious according to the Law of Moses and the ancient priesthood that he followed and served, but also because he did not go to the other extreme of surrendering to the life of sin practiced by the gentile peoples.

**Life in Christ, also granted to us by the mercy of God, does not refer to a life according to the Law of Moses, but neither is it a life according to the concepts of other peoples, generally referred to in the Scriptures as Greeks or Gentiles. Life in Christ Jesus is according to the new creature in Christ Jesus, in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek.**

There are several texts of the Scriptures that teach us about the new condition of a person in Christ Jesus and of which we exemplify just a few below:

*Galatians 5: 11* **And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.**  
**12 I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!**  
**13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.**

*1 John 2: 1* **My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**  
**2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**

*Galatians 3: 26* **For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.**  
**27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**  
**28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

*Colossians 3: 9* **Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,**  
**10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,**  
**11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.**  
**12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;**  
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Saul left behind the Law of Moses and the many practices that had been associated with it for centuries. However, he also understood that this was no reason to indulge in sin in other respects but began to live through the One who freed him from the deep darkness to which he was previously subject.

**And also as for what concerns us, God's mercy takes us out of a life surrendered to contempt, to sin, to darkness, including those denser ones that seek to resemble the light. However, it does so to allow us to choose in freedom to live and walk according to the new life of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**God knows us and our weaknesses. He knows we are fragile vessels dwelling in an evil and corrupt world. God knows how we were made from the dust of the earth, and, in His mercy, He forgives us when we fail.**

**However, in his mercy is also inserted the condition and provision of a new life in the power of God conferred upon us through the “gift of the Holy Spirit.”** (An aspect covered in more detail in the theme of Every Good Gift and Every Perfect Gift).

**By God's mercy in Christ Jesus, we are freed from the body of sin and the eternal death sentence attributed to a person for submitting to sin or rules such as those contained in the Law of Moses. However, by the same mercy in Christ Jesus, we are also called to be made alive in the Lord to a new condition of inner life by which we can overcome the world and the spirit that exists in the world that opposes the Lord and those who believe in Him.**

*John 5: 21 "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will."*

*Romans 8: 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

*1 Peter 3: 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, ...*

*1 Corinthians 15: 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*

*1 John 4: 4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

*1 John 5: 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

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**The newness of life in Christ, also called the life of the new creature, is according to the will of the kingdom of God and not according to the limited and corrupt mentality of the creation, and it is for those who in humility receive God's mercy.**

**Therefore, God's mercy is unchangeable, but the manifestation of its effects is more intense towards those who yearn for it and receive it willingly in their hearts as granted in love by the Father of Mercies and All Comfort.**

**God is eternally merciful, but a person must also be willing to let the Lord's mercy, and the effects that go with it, reach one's heart.**

So, when we observe the prayers and cries of the psalmists and prophets, we can see that they were not impartial regarding the mercy and life they could obtain in God. On the contrary, they were very active and intense before the possibility of the Lord granting these gifts to them, as we see exemplified in another series of texts below:

*Psalms 119: 88* **Revive me according to Your lovingkindness (or mercy),  
So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.**

*Psalms 119: 107* **I am afflicted very much; Revive me, O LORD, according to  
Your word.**

*Psalms 119: 25* **My soul clings to the dust; Revive me according to Your  
word.**

*Psalms 119: 37* **Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things,  
And revive me in Your way.**

*Psalms 119: 40* **Behold, I long for Your precepts; Revive me in Your  
righteousness.**

*Psalms 119: 50* **This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your word has given  
me life.**

*Psalms 119: 149* **Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; O LORD,  
revive me according to Your justice.**

*Psalms 119: 154* **Plead my cause and redeem me; Revive me according to  
Your word.**

*Psalms 119: 156* **Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD; Revive me  
according to Your judgments.**

*Psalms 119: 159* **Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me, O LORD,  
according to Your lovingkindness.**



*Psalms 143: 11 **Revive me, O LORD, for Your name's sake! For Your righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.***

*Isaiah 57: 15 **For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:  
"I dwell in the high and holy place, With him also who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones."***

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Undoubtedly, God wants to grant His mercy in abundance to the hearts of all people and not just in some generalized aspects. However, since part of the manifestation of the Lord's mercy also refers to an offer directed to each individual, as also addressed in the various topics on The Gospel of God, the offer of the abundance of mercy also waits for people to consent to it reaching their lives more extensively.

In this last aspect, we see once more, then, that **if mercy is unconditional in some respects, it is also, at the same time, largely conditional in others or for it to be manifested or bestowed to human beings.**

*Psalms 147: 11 **The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, In those who hope in His mercy.***

*Psalms 103: 11 **For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;***

*Psalms 33: 18 **Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy,***

*19 **To deliver their soul from death, And to keep them alive in famine.***

*20 **Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.***

*21 **For our heart shall rejoice in Him, Because we have trusted in His holy name.***

*22 **Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, Just as we hope in You.***

## C6. Maintaining Life Aligned with God's Mercy – Part 1

Although the Scriptures inform us that “all have sinned” and despised God, we have seen that the Lord offers eternal salvation and reconciliation with Him according to His mercy also to “all” people. And a Christian only exists as a Christian because of this mercy of God towards one's life, a point testified again and again in the Scriptures, as the apostles Peter and Paul also declared:

*1 Peter 1: 3 **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,***  
*4 **to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,***  
*5 **who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.***

*Titus 3: 4 **But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,***  
*5 **not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,***  
*6 **whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,***  
*7 **that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.***

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The Lord's mercy is in Him, and God offers it to people as part of His love. And it is not the works of human beings that make them worthy of God's mercy. On the contrary, mercy is offered to them on the condition of “not deserving it.” And this applies equally to anyone who has become a Christian or a child of God in Christ Jesus.

*Romans 5: 6 **For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.***  
*7 **For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.***  
*8 **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

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Nevertheless, although the abundant mercy of the Lord is equally available to every individual, for no one is saved if it is not also through the mercy of the Lord, there are those among the saved who are more aware of who they indeed were when distanced from fellowship with God, which also enables a broader understanding of God's love and mercy towards them, as mentioned below:

*Luke 7: 47* **"Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."**

*Matthew 9: 12* **When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.  
13 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."**

*Mark 2: 17* **When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."**

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No person on Earth is worthy of God's mercy, no person is righteous from within oneself, and no individual is good solely from one's natural condition. Everyone rebelled against the good will of the Lord, including those who have been practitioners of religions and their demanding rules since childhood, as the Scriptures exemplify in Saul's life.

Therefore, every Christian should be humble before God and before all people, either before those who also know the Lord or those who do not yet know the Lord in their personal lives.

Here, however, we underline that there is yet another crucial point in the Scriptures to which we are called to give due attention. Although no one is worthy of God's mercy, and the Lord is generous in bestowing it on vile sinners, the Lord can withhold His mercy, particularly towards the one who has received mercy and is unwilling to be similarly merciful to others.

Although God's mercies have no end and are constantly renewed, God has set limits to the bestowal of His mercy, as we also saw in the previous chapter. And this limitation may occur even regarding those who have already benefited in abundance from God's mercy towards them.

The Scriptures contain a narrative of the Lord Jesus Christ, particularly about mercy or compassion, which exemplifies the process mentioned in the last paragraphs above, as follows:

*Matthew 18: 23* **"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.  
24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.  
25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.  
26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'**

- 27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.**
- 28 But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'**
- 29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'**
- 30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.**
- 31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.**
- 32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.'**
- 33 'Should you not also have had compassion (or mercy) on your fellow servant, just as I had pity (or mercy) on you?'**
- 34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.**
- 35 So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."**
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Understanding a text like the latter exposed above is very challenging, as its understanding and the practice related to it can only be achieved if the Lord continually grants us His grace.

Returning, then, to the text in reference, we see that the Lord Jesus Christ begins His narrative by saying that the kingdom of God is similar to the circumstance that He describes in that parable. And the story, in turn, tells us that the king (similar to the King of the kingdom of God), at certain times determined by Himself, decides to require the reckoning of people who are indebted to Him.

In addition, this account also describes some characteristics of the king himself. It shows us that the ruler of the kingdom is not a king who despises or merely turns a blind eye to people's debts to Him. He is not a king who indefinitely does not require the accountability of those who become increasingly indebted to him. On the other hand, however, he is a king who has compassion and shows mercy to those who ask the king for it.

As a result, we see that as much as the debt of the narrated debtor was so high that he was subject to losing everything and also his freedom, the king was favorable to his request, for the king is merciful and uses compassion. On the one hand, the king did not cover up the debtor's indebtedness or turn a blind eye to it, but when asked to have compassion, the king forgave the debt of the one who indebted himself on an enormous scale.

And returning to consider that the Lord Jesus Christ said that the King of the heavenly kingdom is like the king of His narrative, and declared that both act similarly, we see that the Lord Jesus teaches us that God sees and knows all aspects of the life of each individual, which also includes the debts they have accumulated before Him. However, at the same time, Christ also teaches us that God is merciful and responds to the requests for mercy that people present to Him.

Yet another facet that can be observed in the account presented by Christ is the bigness of the debt that the first debtor owed his creditor (or the king) compared with a

small debt that another person owed to the first debtor. While one debtor owed 10,000 talents, each talent being a high weight in gold or silver (100 to 200 pounds or 45 to 90 kg each talent), the other debtor owed one hundred pieces or denaries of silver commonly used in the Roman Empire. While one owed tons and tons of gold or silver, the other owed a few hundred grams of silver, which probably did not even amount to 1 pound or half a kilogram or represented approximately 100 days' wages for a typical worker.

The amounts of debts mentioned in Christ's parable are obviously symbolic. However, we understand that they are also meant to show us that the debt that a person owes to God is incomparably different from the debt that people may owe to one another.

And when we look at a person's debt regarding sin and a posture of opposition to God, we can see, for example, the description that one of the authors of the Psalms recorded in the Scriptures presents to us to express a broader notion of what is the amount of debt that people have before God, as follows:

*Psalms 49: 7 till 9*

***None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him (for the redemption of their souls is costly, And it shall cease forever) that he should continue to live eternally, And not see the Pit.***

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Thus, also according to the Psalm above, the debt of a sinful soul before God is unpayable by human beings. Neither the person oneself can pay for it nor one's fellow people would have enough resources to cover this debt, even if someone owned all the resources on Earth.

On the other hand, despite the size of the debt of each human being, God has compassion on those who ask Him for mercy and forgives them the debt they owe before the Lord, before sin, before the rules of the Law of Moses or similar to it, as well as before eternal death or eternal separation from fellowship with the Lord.

Nevertheless, Christ's narrative goes even further than this last essential point concerning receiving God's forgiveness or compassion.

Until the point of the forgiveness of debts, there are many people who appreciate the narrative of Matthew 18 presented at the beginning of this chapter, but Christ's account is not limited to this point. The kingdom of God does not operate only to the extent that a person "receives" mercy for the forgiveness of one's debt. The process of the heavenly kingdom that restores a heart is even broader or more complete.

**In the restoration of a heart by the working of the kingdom of God, the one who receives God's mercy, and yet remains living in the present world, is also called and strengthened to be willing to exercise the practice of mercy towards those who need to receive mercy from the part of the one who has already experienced it by the Lord's grace.**

The principle and practice of extending mercy received to others are also presented in several other texts of the Scriptures, as follows:

*Matthew 6: 12 **And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.***

*Matthew 5: 7 **Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.***

*Luke 6: 35 **But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.***

*36 **Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.***

*37 **Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.***

*38 **Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.***

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Therefore, in the specific matter of a person who receives mercy also showing mercy to others, there is something crucial to note that may not be so evident to some at first glance in the texts related to it.

Both in the text of Matthew 18, regarding the merciful king, and in the text of Luke 6, the last text quoted above, we can observe that the Lord Jesus Christ highlights God or the Heavenly Father as the model of conduct regarding mercy. And it was contrary to this model that the first debtor of the first narrative wanted to act concerning the second debtor also exposed in it.

The first debtor simply disregarded the model he had seen in the merciful king and acted according to his own desire, not according to what had been granted him or what he had seen done toward him.

**Thus, regarding the texts cited above, there are people who become scandalized by them because they teach them to forgive others and show mercy to them. However, the biggest issue presented in these texts is not only the call to exercise forgiveness towards other people but having the willingness to act similarly to how God worked and works toward human beings.**

**A central issue of the texts in reference is whether a person is pleased with the model of mercy that the Lord Jesus Christ pointed out as a reference to be followed, that is, the model of how the Sovereign Heavenly Father Himself works.**

And how can anyone want to continue aiming at the result of God's virtues if one, at the time of using them for others, is not pleased with these virtues?

**God requires nothing of human beings that He has not already done or that He Himself is not willing to do.**

The Heavenly Father is greater than everyone and is above everyone and everything. He is the Father of Lights, the Father of Mercy, and the Father of All Consolation or Comfort. And from Him comes every good and true wisdom, every good gift, and every perfect gift.

In this way, should not the Heavenly Father also be the inspiration of people's lives? And should not His model of mercy also be the model to be followed by those who are His workmanship, created to be conformed to His image and likeness?

The Eternal Son of God Himself, to whom all things were subject to Him, is subject to the Heavenly Father, who is all in all and always mirrored Himself in what the Father showed Him, spoke to Him, and instructed Him to do, as respectively the following texts show us:

*1 Corinthians 3: 21* **Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours:**

*22* **whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours.**

*23* **And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.**

*1 Corinthians 15: 27* **For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.**

*28* **Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.**

*John 8: 38* **"I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father."**

*John 14: 10* **"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works."**

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So, if the Heavenly Father, who is above all, is forgiving and merciful, how could someone who is in a position inferior to God not also be forgiving and merciful after having received the Lord's love and mercy in one's life?

If a person is not forgiving or merciful and wants to take a position of one's own and opposed to the supreme model of mercy, compassion, and love revealed to us so objectively by the Lord Jesus Christ, is one then not trying to elevate oneself above God Himself or supposedly to the height of a sovereign position that knows how to define aspects of life better than God?

The Lord Jesus Christ was outraged, mistreated, and died on the cross without ever having committed a sin or incurred iniquity. And even so, He asked the Heavenly Father to forgive those who committed all evils against Him. And this He did because He knew and trusted in the goodness and just judgment of the Father whom He served.

Could, then, any other person, not innocent and worthy of eternal condemnation if it were not for the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary, choose not to forgive others and think that one would be doing something more righteous than the Lord Jesus Christ

Himself taught and even more correct than the action of Him who is the only Eternal Father of all the creation?

If God has the right over everything and everyone and does not use this right without compassion and mercy towards all people, could it perhaps be appropriate for human beings to be intransigent about all their supposed rights and devoid of mercy regarding their peers?

The Lord Jesus Christ warns us that in the kingdom of God, the functioning is not equal to the rudiments of the world, nor is human conduct the supreme model of righteousness.

The Lord Jesus taught us that although the King of the heavenly kingdom is endlessly merciful, He does not indefinitely sustain mercy towards a person if one's intention is to be free from the bondage to what one was subject to become an instrument of oppression of one's fellow men and to act in disagreement with the virtues, values, and principles of the heavenly kingdom.

The first debtor in reference, according to Matthew 18, received mercy to be free of his debt to be able to act in freedom again, but he used the kindness he had received from God to oppress someone who had far fewer debts than the first debtor and who only asked for an extension of time to settle his debt.

In this way, also by this example, we are taught that the Lord is never conniving or complicit in the sin of people and the oppression they cause to their fellow men when they should have used the mercy they were required to exercise, an aspect also warned in the following text:

*James 2: 13 **For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.***

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**In the texts of Matthew 18 and Luke 6, Christ's first objective is obviously to teach His followers about God's immeasurable mercy and to also exercise mercy according to the model they have in the Heavenly Father. However, the Lord Jesus likewise also teaches, through His words, that a person should not take it for granted that the Heavenly Father will continue to be merciful toward him or her indefinitely if one does not esteem the Lord as the model of one's own conduct of mercy.**

Thus:

*Luke 6: 36 **"Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."***

*Colossians 3: 12 **Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;**  
13 **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.***

*14 **But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.***



## C7. Maintaining Life Aligned with God's Mercy – Part 2

Continuing the point of the previous chapter, we would like to address some other aspects of maintaining life in line with God's mercy, still following Christ's teaching that the Supreme King or the Heavenly Father is also the model by which we are called to exercise mercy.

**And when we come to see that Heavenly Father is the model by which we are called to love and practice mercy, we too may focus on seeing how the Heavenly Father works in His mercy so that the one who wants to show mercy to others may come to use it soberly and not indistinctly or inappropriately.**

**The posture of the King of the heavenly kingdom or the Father of Lights is a model of God's generosity towards each life, but it is also a reference or teaching for Christians that can greatly clarify how they themselves should exercise mercy toward other people.**

Undoubtedly, unlike the first debtor mentioned in Matthew 18, there are many people who are pleased with the Heavenly Father and want to follow the divine instruction to be merciful to others, but who do not know how to proceed when it comes to actually exercising or showing it.

Many people want to forgive others' sins toward them, following the instructions of the Scriptures, but at the same time, they may not know how to act correctly because those whom they want to forgive often do not want to repent and want to continue to walk in their wicked ways.

How, then, to show mercy to others without being complicit with the sin of others, just as the Heavenly Father is not?

In view of this, we believe it is of great value to point out, firstly, that **showing mercy does not imply that the merciful person changes one's conduct regarding God's righteousness or one's commitment to God's truth and the Lord's ways for one's life.**

**Showing mercy does not imply that the merciful person becomes tolerant of sin or does not see evil as such in one's life or of others, for if one does so, one may also distance oneself from the path of manifestation of the Lord's mercy by choosing to lean to that which opposes God.**

**God's love and grace, of which mercy is an integral part, are not willing to be part of sinful human action. Instead, they do not rejoice in unrighteousness and even hate the practice of evil, as also the texts below teach us:**

*1 Corinthians 13: 4 **Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;***

*5 **does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;***

*6 **does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;***

*7 **bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.***

*Proverbs 8: 13 **The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.***

*3 John 1: 11 **Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.***

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**God's mercy is undeniably associated with the aspect of forgiving sins and the attitude of being kind to others even if they are evil, but it never requires the merciful to become like the sinner or a debtor to whom one forgives. The Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself the sins of all humankind and fully assumed the punishment that came from the sins of the entire human race, but He never committed a single sin or transgression.**

The Lord Jesus announced the Gospel, healed and helped all kinds of people, and was among sinners throughout His life in the flesh, for all around Him were sinners. He, however, never became a part or was a co-participant in the sins of those who lived near or around Him.

**The Lord Jesus Christ was not humiliated, despised, ashamed, tortured, and nailed to a rude and cruel cross because of His crimes, transgressions, or iniquities, but because of the sins of all humankind. He is the perfect Lamb through whom the atonement for our guilt was made. He is the Perfect Lamb sacrificed without blemish and without spot, and only because of this can He be the perfect and unique provider of our redemption.**

*Isaiah 53: 5 **But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.***

*1 Peter 1: 17 **And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;***

*18 **knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,***

*19 **but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.***

*20 **He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you***

*21 **who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.***

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Thus, **the call for a Christian to exercise the mercy of God's kingdom towards one's fellow men is not a call for the Christian to become a person who gives up God's well-established principles for one's life.**

The concept of mercy that proposes that people tolerate sin and not turn away from the evil that presents itself to them is subtly and covertly false and deeply perverse.

*Romans 1: 25 ... who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

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**God is abundantly merciful, but at the same time, He is equally unshakable in His truths, purposes, righteousness, and acts. And just as the Heavenly Father shows us how He acts in mercy, so too a Christian is called to seek in the Lord to remain firm in what is right and just, for in everything, one's model is the Heavenly Father and the Son of His Love, who is also the King of Righteousness and who always acts in favor of truth and righteousness.**

*Romans 12: 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

*Psalms 45: 4 And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; And Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.*

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Although the merciful is called to try to let the path of peace with others always open, showing mercy or exercising mercy does not mean agreeing with the evil proposed or practiced by other people to avoid divergences in acts and postures towards them.

For example, a father and his young son. The father is not merciful when he, to avoid any annoyance with the child, tolerates the son practicing all his own desires, including those that are evil. The merciful father steps in to teach his son to walk in the right way, for he loves him, and in his mercy, he dedicates himself to guiding his son and even teaching him in discipline when needed.

Several times, a son or a daughter may have an abusive and evil attitude, including against the father or mother. However, this does not mean that the parents discard the desire to do good to their children when they instruct and discipline them. On the contrary, in doing so with love, they manifest the mercy they have toward the children's future life.

*Proverbs 15: 32 He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.*

*Proverbs 22: 6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.*

*Hebrews 12: 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.*

*4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.*

*5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;*

*6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."*

*7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?*

*8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.*

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Returning to the focus on the matter of (1) receiving mercy to (2) showing mercy to (3) continuing to receive mercy, we add further that we understand that it is very challenging to combine mercy and forgiveness with not being conniving with unrighteousness. And in reality, only "in Christ" and in life in the Spirit of the Lord can a person do it properly in the most diverse situations of one's life.

Advancing now to a second point of this chapter, but still concerning the matter of mercy and forgiving others, it seems necessary to us to delve a little more specifically into this aspect.

We have already seen, then, that showing mercy to others includes doing them good even if they are not worthy of it or have acted under evil, as Paul also describes in the following text:

*1 Thessalonians 5: 15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.*

Thus, **showing mercy to others actually also includes the aspect of forgiving their sins or debts even if they have reciprocated with intense evil. On the other hand, however, we would also like to emphasize here that forgiving others does not necessarily imply resuming fellowship and walking together with the forgiven person, even though by forgiveness this may occur in many circumstances.**

In the example narrated by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18, and which we are using as a premise for this chapter, we do not see that the forgiveness of the debt of the first debtor to the second debtor would also automatically imply a reestablishment of fellowship between them, for the example is restricted to mentioning the forgiveness of a debt that had been generated between them and not that the two were friends, brothers, or relatives who had a closer relationship.

Debt does not always prevent someone from having fellowship with their fellow men. This will depend a lot on whether the debt creditor wants to maintain fellowship with the debtor or whether the debtor is willing to have fellowship with one's creditor.

On the other hand, there may be no debt between two parties, or everything between them is forgiven or resolved, and yet fellowship between them is not possible or not appropriate to be established.

Therefore, the same Scriptures that teach forgiveness also warn Christians, for instance, not to walk in an unequal yoke, pair, or partnership with those who reject the fear of the Lord and who do not want to walk in His ways, including those who want to continue in the ways of the Law of Moses in opposition to the grace of God. Aspects covered more widely in the themes The Gospel of the Righteousness of God, The Gospel of the Glory of God and the Glory of Christ, and The Fellowship of Christians in the World, of which we recall some texts below:

*2 Timothy 3: 1* ***But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:***

*2* ***For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,***

*3* ***unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,***

*4* ***traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,***

*5* ***having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!***

*Romans 16: 17* ***Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.***

*18* ***For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.***

*1 Corinthians 5: 6* ***Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?***

*7* ***Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.***

*8* ***Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.***

*9* ***I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.***

*10* ***Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.***

*11* ***But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; do not even eat with such a person. (NKJV + AV)***

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**In an expressive part of the process, forgiving may be mainly associated with a decision and posture of the forgiver at a given moment. However, appropriate fellowship is continually related to the conduct of life of both parties involved in the relationship. For this reason, forgiveness and fellowship can represent different aspects and are not equal or synonyms as some people try to teach others.**

For example, a person can forgive those close to him or her for the harm they have done him or her but remain perfectly in God's will precisely by keeping oneself distant from that person or group of people one has forgiven. And this may happen because others do not change their conduct of life contrary to God, as forgiveness and fellowship are different aspects and, therefore, have different practical characteristics and conducts.

And when there is not a good and sober separation between forgiveness and fellowship, the use of mercy and forgiveness may be significantly impaired so that what should be for the benefit of the one who exercises mercy towards others may become a deviation from walking in the ways of the Lord.

There are individuals who have a great willingness to forgive others who have wronged them. But because they think, in a distorted way, that they should also return to relationships with those people they would like to forgive, they are not willing to exercise the release of forgiveness, for they see the aspect of forgiveness and the return to the relationship as linked in all cases or as if one necessarily implied the other, which, however, actually should not be the case in many specific circumstances.

Forgiveness, of course, removes obstacles to a good relationship and facilitates the reestablishment of fellowship. But, even so, the removal of barriers on one side and the return to the relationship between the two parties are quite different aspects. One aspect may imply the other, but this is not always the case. And in many situations, before God, the return to fellowship should not always be done.

By Christ's work on the cross of Calvary, the price for the remission of people from their eternal debts to sin, the body of sin, the law of ordinances that condemns them, and eternal death has already been paid. The debt that stood in the way of the relationship of human beings with the Lord has already had its value paid by the sacrifice of Christ Jesus as the perfect Lamb. But despite this, not all people accept what the Lord has done for them and return to God to relate to Him and establish a firm fellowship with the Lord.

God offers forgiveness to people regardless of whether they deserve it or want it. However, it is up to each individual to accept or receive forgiveness, as well as the offer of reconciliation and return to fellowship so that this becomes a personal experience. Although people's debt to God is already paid in Christ Jesus, so that people can continue to walk in fellowship with God, they need to renounce, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the deliberate desire for subjection to sin and fellowship with darkness, unbelief, idols, and sanctuaries dedicated to their idols.

*2 Corinthians 6: 14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*

*15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?*

*16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."*

*17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."*

*18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."*

*7: 1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

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According to God's instructions, there are several situations in which a Christian is called to choose not to walk close to another person who has never even caused him or her a direct offense but who, in one's conduct, surrenders to what is primarily opposed to God and stands in the way of the possibility of the Christian's fellowship with him or her.

Showing mercy to others is removing obstacles and cooperating with people so that they may choose the path of truth. However, people's decision to walk in the Lord's way essentially remains an individual choice.

In the example of the two debtors in reference, according to Matthew 18, the king removed from the first debtor what limited him to living in freedom. The forgiven individual, however, did not appreciate the favor he had received, showing this by using freedom to try to subjugate his fellow man to the similar bondage he asked to be freed from.

Showing mercy can, therefore, encompass an act by the creditor on behalf of the debtor, taking away from the latter every obstacle that one can remove to help the debtor so that one can start one's life in freedom again. However, whether or not to take advantage of the mercy shown to an individual and what is done on behalf of the debtor is, in many respects, up to the forgiven debtor.

Let us note here carefully that the message of the Lord Jesus Christ in the account of the two debtors mentioned in Matthew 18 is addressed to the same person in two different positions: First, one can be in the position of a debtor and, secondly, one can be in the condition of a creditor. And keeping life in line with God's mercy is directly linked to how one behaves in both points, that is, as a debtor who wants forgiveness and as a creditor who forgives and favors others, just as one wanted to be forgiven (also according to Matthew 6: 12).

Nevertheless, whether a forgiven person will start to adopt postures and actions that allow the restoration of one's fellowship with the forgiver depends a lot on how each individual will continue to act in one's own life after forgiveness has been granted.

The Lord Jesus teaches us that the one who does not extend mercy when required to exercise it, according to the mercy one also received from the Heavenly Father, may

again become imprisoned by shackles and subject to torturers, and it is up, therefore, to a Christian always to forgive what concerns one's personal life. However, what follows the forgiveness granted also needs to be appreciated with discernment and under the instruction of the Holy Spirit so that the experience with God's mercy becomes a continuous experience of life and not of ties and embarrassments because of complacency or complicity with those with whom it is inappropriate to have fellowship.

Every Christian is called to be merciful and forgiving, just as one's Heavenly Father is. And this is also necessary to not interrupt the mercy on one's life because God knows how to deal perfectly with forgiven offenders. However, the Christian is also called to remain personally in submission to one's Eternal Lord so that, in Him, one may continue to be instructed how to act with wisdom and understanding as to how to act after having extended mercy to others.

In this way, like other aspects of the Christian life, the aspect of mercy should always go hand in hand with the theme of being called to trust in God in everything and to be guided in everything by the Merciful Shepherd. The practice of mercy, on the part of the Christian, is also to be carried out together with the Lord and under His continuous instruction, for dealing with others, regarding the results they will reap due to their improper practices, also involves aspects that are of the exclusive sphere of God on behalf of those who trust in Him.

On the one hand, a Christian is indeed called to forgive others through God's mercy toward one's life. On the other hand, however, there are several other aspects of how a Christian should deal with those who have reviled him or her that are within the Lord's exclusive sphere of action or concerning which a Christian depends on the Lord's more specific guidance, as exemplified in a few more texts below:

*Romans 12: 17 **Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.***

*18 **If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.***

*19 **Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.***

*1 Peter 2: 21 **For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:***

*22 **"Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";***

*23 **who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;***

*24 **who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed.***

*25 **For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.***

*1 Corinthians 2: 12 **Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.***



**13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.**

**14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

**15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.**

**16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.**

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And yet as a third or last point in this chapter, and observing the book of the prophet Hosea, we see that the Lord warns us of something that perhaps may help us to understand what happened to the first debtor of Matthew 18.

Let us, then, seek to look carefully at this very precious text:

***Hosea 10: 12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.***

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The first debtor initially sought God's mercy for his own life and received mercy from the Lord in his quest. However, later on, he did not reap mercy again because he had nothing to reap or reap according to mercy since, in this case, he did not sow the seed that he had received from the Lord to see it reproduced or multiplied.

Here, then, **we are called to understand that God's righteousness and mercy are granted to people for their benefit, but also so that people made free by the Lord use the righteousness and mercy received from God to sow seeds that generate a continuity of fruits according to the Lord's righteousness and mercy.**

Therefore, when the first debtor wanted to use the mercy extended to him to oppress others, he did not sow in righteousness and no longer reaped the fruits of mercy.

The first debtor ceased the continuity of the manifestation of God's mercy towards him also because he started to use what is an abomination before the Lord, which is the use of diverse weights and measures, wanting a kind of treatment for him, but practicing different ones toward his fellow men.

***Proverbs 20: 10 Diverse weights and diverse measures, They are both alike, an abomination to the LORD.***

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Here we see that God does not endorse the use of the gifts that He gives so that people make use of them for the exploitation of others or to allow themselves to be guided by greed and not by love, as is also shown to us by the apostles Peter and Paul according to the texts that respectively follow below:

***2 Peter 2: 1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.***

***2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.***

***3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.***

***1 Timothy 6: 3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,***

***4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,***

***5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.***

----

The provision that God grants us through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross of Calvary for the forgiveness of sins is not to be sold or marketed. It is offered and given by the Lord through His grace and mercy, and only in this way is it available to people of each generation.

In this way, God is merciful regarding the past of sinners who receive the forgiveness that the Lord offers them in Christ Jesus, but God does not give a guarantee of maintaining His mercy towards those who subsequently do not use it to promote peace or use it to generate oppressions, dissensions, and unrighteousness against others.

By teaching us in His account of Matthew 18, the Lord Jesus is teaching us about how the broader process of using and maintaining the manifestation of God's mercy on a person's life is, for what He teaches us is under the characteristics of what the kingdom of God is, which is also the expression of the Lord's righteousness and peace. And it is to the entire exposition of the text in reference that we should be attentive.

***Romans 14: 17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.***

One of the aspects of the fruit of God's righteousness is the Lord's mercy so that the eternal debt of sin is taken away and peace with God can be established. However, this fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who want to reap according to mercy and for those who also want to reap and promote peace.

***James 3: 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.***

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What the Lord offers us from His heavenly kingdom encompasses a complete cycle of goodness. From soil preparation to harvesting, everything is righteous and aims to promote the peace that only the Lord can give.

The cycle of goodness always starts with God. The king of the narrative we are looking at in more detail forgave the first debtor even before this one forgave the second debtor. The king did not impose any preconditions for pardoning the first debtor.

Nevertheless, when the first debtor interrupted the cycle of goodness towards others by acting as an evil servant, the king also changed his actions towards this individual.

Therefore, **the Heavenly Father does not require anything of His children that He has not first granted them. For this reason, when the Lord asks us for something, it is because in Him we can also find the provision to do what He asks or instructs us to do.**

*1 John 4: 19 **We love Him because He first loved us.***

*Luke 6: 36 **"Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."***

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**When a person comes to God to ask for mercy, God grants it freely, but He also does it so that the one who received mercy in the sequence may be merciful, just as the Heavenly Father Himself is.**

**And if the person who received mercy also follows the practice of showing mercy to one's fellow men, according to the Lord's wisdom and instruction, one thus has the heavenly guarantee of continuing to receive God's unending mercy forever.**

*Matthew 5: 7 **Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.***

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Our prayer to God at this point, then, is that we may find grace before the Lord so that He daily may bestow His mercy upon us, including the grace so that we also learn to be merciful. And may the Lord grant us peace so that we may also practice peace and reap the countless fruits arising from the Lord's righteousness toward us.

And yet, that the cycle of goodness and mercy of the kingdom of God over our lives may be continuous in all the days of our lives, as the psalmist David declared with such confidence.

*Psalms 23: 6 **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.***

## C8. The Teaching and Assistance of God's Mercy

In the previous chapters, we could see, from the Scriptures, that the will of God is that a person both receives mercy in abundance in one's personal life and shows with wisdom and sobriety the same mercy received towards one's fellow men.

Nevertheless, the fact that God's will instructs a Christian in these two senses of the relationship with mercy, or rather, with a virtue of God Himself, should not be seen by Christians as an arduous, overly complex, or heavy mission to be carried out, because in whatever the Lord directs us to follow His will, He also assists us with the abundance of His grace to do so.

*2 Corinthians 9: 8 **And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.***

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Therefore, **when a Christian is instructed to exercise mercy received, it is not in one's own strength that one is called to do so. Instead, one is called to do so by the wisdom, strength, and power of God Himself granted to one's life.**

**Just as a Christian in everything is called to act in God and God through him or her, so it is also regarding understanding and practicing the Lord's mercy.**

For this reason, **it is only in fellowship with Christ that we can reach the sublimity of both the continual receipt of heavenly mercy and the strength and power to exercise God's mercy toward others.**

*John 15: 5 **"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."***

*Psalms 59: 17 **To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises; For God is my defense, My God of mercy.***

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Furthermore, **in addition to the Heavenly Father Himself granting the grace and power for a Christian to receive and exercise mercy, He also offers us His Beloved Son to assist us in drawing us closer to the Heavenly Father and teach us to walk according to His mercy.**

In this way, **so that there is no doubt about God's perfect assistance to us also in the aspect of mercy, God Himself, in Christ as the Son of Man, demonstrated His will to assist us forever and to grant us abundantly His eternal and sublime mercy, as exemplified in the texts that follow:**

*Hebrews 2: 17 **Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in***

**things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.**

**18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.**

**Hebrews 4: 12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

**13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**

**14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.**

**15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**

**16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

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The Lord Jesus Christ suffered injuries, temptations, and injustices of all sorts firstly to make provision for the eternal salvation of our souls. However, He likewise went through all these aspects to demonstrate how much the Lord wants to assist us in everything, including the aspect of receiving and being strengthened in the Heavenly Father's mercy.

**The Lord Jesus Christ was the most wronged person who ever lived and walked on the Earth, and yet He did not turn away from the mercy of God, neither in terms of receiving it nor in terms of exercising it with sobriety and wisdom. And for this also, God established Him to assist us in everything according to the mercy of the Heavenly Father.**

Thus, for those who believe in Christ and receive Him as Lord in their hearts, He **firstly** assists them as those who need mercy to be freed from the heavy burdens they have come to have on their lives. And **secondly**, He assists them as those who need to be taught in everything so that they also may appropriately exercise mercy to continue to receive it abundantly and **continuously in their lives**. Aspects exposed respectively in verses 28 and 29 of the text below:

**Matthew 11: 28 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

**29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**

**30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."**

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*In Christ*, both the aspect of receiving mercy for deliverance from bondage to sin and burdens received or assumed in personal life and the point of showing mercy wisely toward others are not heavy but light.

When someone allows Christ to be the Lord and Shepherd of one's life, and not other people, communities, institutions, or religions, the Lord Jesus leads those who trust in Him under continuous goodness and mercy, according to the text of Psalm 23 that we have already seen in part in the previous chapter and repeat below:

*Psalms 23: 1 **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.***

*6 **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life;  
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.***

As we have mentioned several times, God's mercies never cease, but people can deprive themselves of access to them when they distance themselves from the Lord. God's mercies are in God. Therefore, continual conversion to the Lord is a central aspect of receiving abundant mercy, being instructed in it, and experiencing the breadth of its benefits, as well as being provided with it to also exercise it properly regarding other people.

*Joel 2: 13 **So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.***

*Jude 1: 20 **But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,**  
21 **keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.***

*Romans 8: 26 **Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.***

*27 **Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.***

**Because of the abundance of the Heavenly Father's mercies and their benefits on our behalf, plus what the Lord can do through us, is that Paul, in the book of Romans, goes so far as to call us or plead that we, in trust, present ourselves to the Lord to live and walk according to the will of the Heavenly Father.**

*Romans 12: 1 **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.***

***2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.***

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Trusting that God in His mercy will assist us at all times and in all circumstances of our lives, to the point of presenting ourselves to the Lord to live and walk according to His will as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice to God, represents, then, an essential part of what the Lord expects from those who come to understand how much heavenly mercy is beneficial to their lives now and for eternity.

Therefore, **blessed be God for His eternal mercy and constant love towards those who believe in the inexhaustible and immeasurable gifts of the Eternal Lord.**

*Psalms 136: 1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.*

***2 Oh, give thanks to the God of gods! For His mercy endures forever.***

***3 Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords! For His mercy endures forever:***

***4 To Him who alone does great wonders, For His mercy endures forever;***

***5 To Him who by wisdom made the heavens, For His mercy endures forever;***

***6 To Him who laid out the earth above the waters, For His mercy endures forever;***

...

***26 Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever.***

***2 Corinthians 1: 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.***

## Bibliography

Note on Biblical Texts referenced:

- 1) The biblical texts without explicit indications of reference were drawn from NKJV Bible, as indicated below.
- 2) Highlights in the biblical texts, such as underline, bold, or similar were added by the author of this study.

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