

# Gods Abundant Mercy

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer's sermon emphasizes the infinite and abundant nature of God's mercy and its implications for Christian living and faith.*

**Duration:** 37:59

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:6, Romans 8:14-15, Ephesians 1:3, 1 Peter 1:3, 1 Peter 1:23

**Topics:** "Mercy Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding God's mercy. He shares a story about a missionary disciplining a young convert who repeatedly broke the rules. The missionary humorously compares their forgiveness to a bottle that is almost empty. The preacher then transitions to a story about an artist hiring a man to pose for a painting, but the man spends his money on improving his appearance instead. The sermon concludes with the preacher encouraging honesty in prayer and reminding listeners of the mercy of the Lord.

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## Transcript

Just a little morphel from that third verse of the first chapter. Blessed father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Last week I talked on this blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today I would speak on according to his abundance. Now Peter, just before he said, according to his abundance, had blessed God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we find there was a clear reason for the outburst.

He blessed because the Father had blessed us. If the Father had not blessed us, we could not possibly bless the Father. And if we had not been begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, there would be no possibility of our blessing the Father.

So he said, blessed be the God and Father of Jesus Christ, because he hath begotten us, and he begot us again, out of his abundant mercy. Now I have pointed this out in order that we might see that there is always a clear link between one truth and another in the Bible. The apostle breaks out into an orthology.

He wasn't simply having himself a spiritual time. He went before, and look what followed. And you will find there were clear, logical reasons for the doxology.

And it is always so with New Testament Christians. Spirit-led life is a clear, logical, and rational life. I must repeat what I said last Sunday night, in a different context, that you and I must have the courage that belongs to our own Christian faith.

And we must stop this ignoble apologizing. Cease to take this quick Spaniel attitude out in the world. There is no reason we should, like a paddled, cocker Spaniel, look sad and dreary and cringe and crawl before the world.

The world has nothing to want, and we have no cause to apologize to the world. We are believers in a faith that is as well authentic as any solid fact of life. And what we believe, and the links in the chain of evidence, are clear and rational.

So that instead we should boldly assert, if we believed in ourselves and in the faith, with the fanaticism that the Communist believes in his devil-inspired doctrines, the Church could go off the defensive and go over to the offensive. Communists never do. Christians always do.

And that's why we're where we are. I'm glad that the ecclesiastical courage to announce and join in singing a song that's an Easter song. I think that it's time we rescue some of these great songs from one Sunday a year.

Give them where they belong. The Church has a right to rejoice. Christ the Lord is risen today, and our Son sets in blood no more.

Marvelous imagery, marvelous scripture that Wesley wove into that hymn. And if we had believed it, we'd go off the defensive to the attack. And so instead of crawling before the world and apologizing in lewd tones before the learned world, we would frankly and boldly assert that Jesus is risen, and what are you going to do about that great fact? I say that Peter blessed the Lord God, simply letting himself go like an old lady in a camp meeting.

There were particularly sound theological reasons for saying blessed. He blessed him because he had begotten us again, and because it was through his abundant mercy that he was born. And the hope he had begotten us to was a living hope, not a dead one.

I point out that the spirit-led Christian life is not according to whim, but according to caprice. And yet I know Christians who feel you cannot be spiritual without being capricious, and that the more impulsive you are, the more spiritual you are. I remember years ago, I haven't heard of him now for a long time, the way they all do.

But he was a very popular healing evangelist, and he just oozed in, or tumbled into his meetings. Just tumbled into them, never knew what anybody was going to do. He was too busy running around to ever plan anything, so he just sort of stumbled and stumbled into the meetings, muddled through them.

And because he was like that, they were advertising him as a man of lightning changes. Why, they said, he's likely to get up and take the offering before they sing the first hymn, or he's just as likely to get up and preach the sermon and then have a hymn. What's he going to do? Well, brother, I don't know, lightning changes.

Sometimes it's for laziness and poor planning, and lack of thought. Sometimes it's for romance. There's usually no good in the Church of Christ, and there wouldn't be any good if there weren't for Ford or

General Motors, either.

Imagine, if you will, a fellow who would say to the boss at General Motors, now, Mr. Jones, one of these impulsive fellows, you never know what I'm going to do. I'm a man of lightning change. Someday I may be out at seven in the morning, and other times at noon.

Sometimes I may go to my machine, and another time I may push another fellow up and take his machine. I just fear, you know, how long he lasts. He just lasts long enough to get his pay and get out of there.

You can't run one of these impulsive, changeable, and constantly changing men of lightning changes. It's like that among the apostles. They were spirit-led, and they were likely to do always what God wanted them to do.

But somehow or other, it's so out, as it properly should, that what God wanted them to do, perfectly fit in with the total scheme of redemption of God in the New Testament. So that there was no place for the temperamental, whimsical fellow. Peter was no good to God, and he got old and temperamental.

As long as he was temperamental, scolding the Lord with glory for this or that, he was no good to the Lord. He was a pest. But when he got filled with the Holy Ghost, and got a vision or two, and got suffering a little, and kicked out of it, leveled down, then he became the great apostle, second only to Paul in the New Testament.

But God then changes out of Peter, and settled him down into the, into the harness where he could work for the Lord. Those who feel that if it isn't queer, it isn't spiritual, if it isn't capricious, it isn't of the Holy Ghost. But I notice a clear lot of everything anybody said in the New Testament, and the reason they said it all.

We're not victims of caprice, neither are we victims of the weather, nor are we victims of the state of our health. Mr. McAfee coughed all night last night, but he's still around. And occasionally I'm still here, and I don't like sticky weather, but you have to go right on, brother.

You can't show up at the house of God at 70, and the humidity 31. You've got to go to church no matter. And it's the same way after prayer.

One man said that you were supposed to go to God and be honest with God. He said, when you go to be honest, I said, tell God the truth. One other man said, when you go to prayer and you feel that the whole thing bores you, he said, don't hide it, tell God I'm bored with this whole business.

He said, God will forgive you, and bless you, and straighten you out, and get you started right. But the main thing is, be honest, no matter whether you feel like it or not. So that was the way Christians did things.

They didn't, they weren't in terms of moods. And if you knew the whole truth, there are very few Christians whose moods are entirely level, and sustained level. Sometimes people come to me, and they say, Brother Tozer, could I call me up in a half hour with you? Usually turns out to be an hour and a half to two hours.

So they'll come over. He'll say to me, I believe I'm a spiritual man, I've been filled with the Holy Ghost, I'm all created, but there's one weakness I'd like to have you tell me how I can correct. I don't always have the

feeling, spirituality.

Sometimes I'm up, and sometimes I'm a little down, and there doesn't seem to be always that high level. What can I do about it? And I say, I wish you'd tell me, because I don't know either, and I haven't read a biography of, and as it was Francis of Assisi, I might accept him, but outside of him I don't know any honest Christian. I live a consistently high level.

I fly at an altitude of 16,000 feet all the way. Now if any of you would get up and say, Mr. Tozer, I have lived for 19 years now and never have seen a devil. Blessed art thou, honor you, but I have never reached their praise for your pastor, because there are times when my liver's out of order.

I study with no more desire to pray than a horse, but a little while, and a little while not according to what I said at first. But I only mean to say that we are men and women who live according to the logic of spiritual truth, not according to our feelings. The old writer, they would say, but nothing had changed except their frame.

One of his writers said, a sweetest frame. Now please, anybody knows that. What does the writer mean when he says, I dare not trust, and I've never found anybody that knows.

Well, we say it a little differently. We say frame of mind. Same thing.

Say, all he was a sweetest of mine, but holy lean on Jesus' name. High spiritual logic, and not according to shifting frames of mind. Spiritual doctrine, some people don't like that.

They say, oh, you've got to be blessed all the time. Happy, happy, happy, happy. But quit lying and tell the truth.

They'll have to admit there are days when they're not so. But don't let it get you down. Just read your word and pray and sing a song and take the means of grace, and you'll be as happy today as you were yesterday.

Now, it says here, and this is what I want to really get at, according to his abundant mercy. Whatever God did and whatever, according to his abundant mercy. And we have the adjective abundant here to modify the word mercy.

It describes God's mercy. You know that word abundant comes from a Greek word, which at least had these associated meanings. It means the largest number.

It means very large. It means very great. It means much, and it means many.

Now, it can mean all those things. The largest number is very large, very great, much, many mercies. God has begotten us again.

And I give you a note here on that word abundant, that everything God has is infinite. That is, God being infinite, everything about him is infinite, which means that it has no boundary anywhere for you to think. I remember I preached on the infinitude of God here one time, and only one man, and that was Brother Kramer, came down and got me my sermon.

But so far as I know, everybody else just wrote that one off. But to get hold of that, and even if it hurts your head, you need to get hold of that. It's good for you to know that God is infinite, unlimited, with no posts

anywhere saying, this is the end.

There's no such post in the universe. God Almighty fills it, and all he is is infinite and unlimited. So that we do not need any enlarging adjective.

When we say God, we need to say God great love, although we do say it. When we say God mercy, we don't need to say God's abundant mercy, though we do say it. We say it is to cheer and elevate our own thoughts, not to tell the degree and the mercy of God.

There is no, there are no degrees in the mercy of God. There couldn't be, for God is degree-less, infinite. Therefore, when you say God's mercy, you're talking about that which is so vast, vast doesn't describe it, because it has no limits anywhere.

Its center is any place, and it hurts nowhere. Now, these adjectives are useful when we talk about earth. We talk about the great love of a man for his family.

We talk about little faith, or great faith, or more faith. We talk about wealth, and we say he was a man of considerable wealth. If he has a little more tucked away somewhere, we say he is a man of great wealth.

But if his bank account is still large, he's a man of very great wealth. And if he really owns it, we say he's a man of fabulous wealth. We go anywhere up and down the scale from considerable to fabulous.

You know where you belong on this, in this scale, because human wealth is that which may vary up and down the scale, from fabulous to so much you can't count it. But when we come to God, there is no such degreeing of things. When we say that God is rich, God's riches, we include all the riches there are.

God isn't richer, more rich. He's rich. So he isn't more merciful, less merciful.

He's merciful. For whatever God is, he is full of unlimited grace. But you say, then, why does the word abundant occur here? Why does it say his love that? Those adjectives are put in order to elevate our minds to the vastness of the unlimited mercy of God that Peter said it was abundant.

Now, God's God. And for that reason, all comparisons are futile. God's mercy is equal to God's.

If you want to know how merciful God is, then you will know just, just, just how God is, and see God, and then you'll know how merciful God is. I remember Brother Kopp telling us, missionary to Africa, a deacon in the church in Congo, a great, big, fine fellow. And he, of course, had the job of disciplining the converts.

And one young convert hadn't gotten yet, and he was inclined to break the rules and do things he shouldn't. And they disciplined him and disciplined him again and again, and a big, strapping Christian deacon called in his erring brother. And he said, Now, brother, failing us and disappointing us, disgracing your Christian calling, about enough.

Now, when we started, we had a bottle of forgiveness. But I'm here to tell you, young man, that bottle is just about empty. And we're just about through with you.

The missionary got a chuckle out of that. He thought it was a very quaint and picturesque way, and they're about done with that fellow. But you know, that bottle of forgiveness that God has, has no top nor bottom to it.

God never says to a man, never and never has said to a man, Now, the bottle of my mercy is about empty. God doesn't run out of a bottle. God's mercy is God acting the way he acts toward people, and therefore that it is abundant mercy.

And may I point out something here, which you may have overlooked, that every God bestowed is according to mercy. You know, there's a sort of a pardonable heresy abroad that God deals with some people in mercy and some injustice. But God deals with everybody in mercy.

If God did not deal with everyone in mercy, we would all have perished before we had time to be converted. We fall into a vast, limitless sea of divine mercy. And it's the mercy of God that sustains the worst sinner.

For life, it is according to the mercy of God. If we have protection, it is according to the mercy of God. If we have food, it is the mercy that gives us food.

And if we have providence to guide us, it is God's mercy. David said, Have mercy upon me and hear my prayer. Was he just using words? No.

Again, a sound, clear, logical fact. According to thy mercy, hear my prayer. Mercy even enters into the hearing of prayers.

Mercy must enter into the holiest act any man can ever perform. Constant mercy on the part of God. The fact that I'm sane instead of somewhere committed to an institution is an act of mercy on God.

The fact that I'm free and not in prison is a mercy of God. The fact that I'm alive and not dead is God's mercy over me. And the same for every man, Jew and Gentile and Mohammedan, whether they believe it or not.

So you and I float in a sea of the mercy of God. I admit it's when you enter the sanctuary. I admit it is when you come across the threshold into the kingdom of God that mercy becomes justified and recognized.

And it's certainly intensified and pointed up. And it's forgotten again. But that same broad mercy of God kept that sinner through maybe 50 years of rebellion.

His father was 60 years old when he was born again. 60 years! He was condemned and told dirty stories and sworn and lied and cursed. And then he gave his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ and was converted to heaven.

And the mercy that took my father to heaven is a great mercy, and we celebrate the mercy that took him. But it is no greater than the mercy that kept him and endured him 60 years. Before, but it perfectly fits here.

An old Jewish rabbi in Old Testament times, a man came to his stay overnight. It was dark and he was a traveler. And he said, I've made it to your house.

Could I stay overnight? The old rabbi said, sure. He said, you're a very old man, aren't you? He said, all right, come in, you must stay overnight. The old man came in.

They sat around and talked. And the rabbi said, what about your relation to God? What about Jesus? He said, I don't believe in God. He said, I don't have any faith in God at all.

He closed and opened the door and said, get out of my house. I won't keep an atheist in my house overnight. The old man got up and hobbled to the door and the door was shut again.

The rabbi sat down by his camp in Old Testament times. And a voice said to him, son, why did you turn that old man out? He said, I turned him out to be an atheist, and I can't endure him overnight. And God said, son, I've endured him nearly a hundred years.

Don't you think you could endure him one night? He leaped from his chair and rushed out, took the old man in his arms and beat him like a long lost brother. It was the mercy of God that for one hundred years nearly had endured that old man. And so the mercy of God endured my father fifty years, and the mercy of God endured me seventeen years, and then has endured since.

So let's get away from this semi-heretical idea that God deals with some people in mercy and deals with other injustices. He deals with everybody in mercy, dealt with in mercy. The Bible plainly declared, says here that his mercies, the Lord is good to all, are over all his works, 145 psalms.

Now, God's mercy, I can see the more I pray and read my Bible and think, the more I've got to write my book on the atrocities of sin. I've got to do it, I hope God will let me live that long. But this idea that God works according to one facet one day and according to another facet another is all wrong.

God never violates any facet of his nature. When Judas Iscariot to hell, he did not violate mercy. And when God appeared, he did not violate justice.

But everything God does, he does with the full protection of all of his infinite attributes. So when a sinner, though he lived to be a hundred against God every moment of his life, he is still a partaker of the mercy of God. He still floats on a sea and it is from the mercy of God that he's not consumed.

But now there will be a day when the sinner will pass out from the realm where God's mercies and he will hear a voice depart from me, I never knew you ye that work iniquity. And hell will be justly apportioned of those who refuse redeeming mercy, evidential mercy that has kept the sinning man all his lifetime. So we Christians, we do the door of mercy and then live apart from that door.

We're in the room of mercy and there is a sanctuary of mercy and God has had mercy upon you all your life, sir. We must not become self-righteous in such wonderful lives that God blesses us because we're good. That's not so.

God blesses us because of his abundant mercy bestowed on us, not because of any goodness, though he's busy making us good. I don't think that even heaven itself will ever permit us to forget that we are recipients of the mercy of God. The very angels that burn are there because of the goodness of God.

The very seraphim with their six wings are there because of the goodness of God. So you and I will never be permitted to forget Calvary. A little old morbid song says, lest I forget, forget, forget dark Calvary, but there's a modicum of truth in it at any rate.

We must never forget that we live because we are recipients of the mercy of God. He wants people to be holy as he is holy. He does not deal with them according to the degree of their holiness, but according to the abundance of his mercy.

Honesty requires us to admit this. I pray that we may all be perfectly honest and admit it. Now, the unjust man will assume mercy to judgment.

A hundred years the old atheist sinned against his God and got him overnight, yet the day will be when the old atheist will die and pass from mercy to judgment. I believe in justice and I believe in judgment, and I believe that the only reason mercy judgment is that God, by a divine omniscient act of redemption, so a man could escape justice and live in the sea of mercy. The just man, that is the man who believes in Jesus Christ and who was born anew and who is a child of God, has mercy always.

The unjust man lives in it now in a lesser degree, but the time will come when he has judgment. Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous, for the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. For the unjust sinner, though, he is kept by the mercies of God, kept from death, kept from insanity, kept from disease, kept a lifetime in the mercy of God.

Yet he will violate that mercy, turn his back on it, and walk into judgment. Then it's too late for the man, for the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment. But in the meantime, you and I stand in the mercy of God.

So remember, when you kneel down to pray, don't do like the man who went to the altar on his knees, he was under terrible, blistering conviction, and he had learned the Ten Commandments when he was a younger fellow. So he began to talk to God about his sins. He had them numbered.

I mean the Ten Commandments numbered. He said, Now, Father, now God, remember number one, number four, number seven. Remember, Father, I kept number two and number three.

Number six, foolish, oh, unutterably foolish. We should go to God and dicker with him like that. We should go to God, storekeeper, and portion out our goodness.

I'd rather follow old Thomas Hook, the old Puritan saint. He came to die and he'd been a man elevated way above the average in his spiritual life. They said, Brother Hook, you go to receive your reward.

No, no, no, he said, I go to receive mercy. Went out, although he rated high upon in the level of holy men, he went out not to look for his reward, but to look for still more of the mercy of God. So blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his ability, I think that's about enough.

The sun shines on the just and on the unjust, and we float on this shimmering sea of the limitless, boundless, infinite mercy of the Lord, our God. Wonderful is God's mercy. I remember years ago, I preached on the text, thou God, forgive us sin.

Thou art a God who forgives sin. And I didn't know it, but a woman, some long time afterward, she told me, I got it somehow through a letter, telephone conversation or some way. She said that night, that night that you repeated the text, thou God, forgive us sin.

She said, that night I believed and my sins were pardoned. And I'm a Christian now. And what could I say more than this? God of abundant mercy.

So don't look in at yourself, look away. Penelope said, try not to fix yourself over. No, it won't do.

Come as you are. For this, I told about the artist. He wanted to paint a picture, but for some reason he hadn't been able to paint a picture of a cramp, a real cramp, a bum off the street.

We're talking about all the time down here in Skid Row. So we went to Skid Row and he hunted up the most disreputable, down at the heel, straight, dirty, disheveled, ungroomed. And he said, I'd like to have you come to my studio.

I want to paint you. His face brightened up, baggy, bleary eyed, took on a new light. He said, you mean you want to put me in a picture? Said, yeah, I want to paint you into a picture.

Would you come? How much will it mean to me? Well, he said, I want you to come several times. He said, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you five dollars now and here's my address.

You show up there tomorrow morning and I'll tell you what to do. Next to the doorbell rang and the artist went to the door. Here stood a fine looking fellow, shirt on, clean tie, haircut, new hat.

And he's having a reasonable facsimile of the press. He said, morning, what could I do for you? He said, show me, boss. He said, I'm just set for my picture this morning.

The artist said, you the fellow I hired? Yeah. He said, I didn't want to come to your fine place looking like a bum. So I spent this twenty-five dollars getting myself.

The artist said, I can't use you. He said, goodbye. Dismissed him.

He wanted him as he was. Two men went up into the temple to pray and one said, here I am, God. I'm all fixed up every hour.

And the other one said, oh God, I just crawled in off a skid row. Have mercy upon me. The skid row bum sent the other man away hardened and unforgiving.

Blessed be the God, Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again. So come just as you are. God will show you what to do.

You straighten me out. There's no contradiction there, slightest, between what I've said now and all my preaching on repentance. For God does require repentance, as I have said.

But that's something else again. And when the human spirit comes to God feeling that it's better, more acceptable, automatically shuts itself out from God's presence. But when the human spirit comes to God knowing that anything it gets will be, then repentance has done its proper work.

God will forgive and bless that man, take him into his heart. And that all God's kindness is through mercy. You go out on the sidewalk, mercy, let's just stand there.

You greet your friend with a mind and a clear voice, mercy gave you that. You go sit down and do a good meal, mercy gave you that meal. You rest on a nice sofa, take a little nap, mercy gave you that.

You get up and go to your work, mercy did that for you. We're all recipients of God. The Christian knows it and has taken that mercy, so to speak, to assure his abundant entrance into the kingdom of God.

A sinner is a recipient of God's truth, but he trackles it under his feet and prepares himself for an endless hell. Father, we pray, bless thou this truth. O God, thy mercies are abundant, mercies full and free, and have they not, O God, found out many.

We thank thee for thy mercies, thy many abundant, full mercies. Now we pray that thou wilt help us to lean back and trust and not be afraid, hate sin and love righteousness, flee from iniquity and follow after godliness. But always know that in all that we do, mercy is around us like the air underneath us as the earth above us as the stars.

We live in a merciful world to serve a merciful God, live and serve, being in the abundant mercies of the triune God. Graciously grant us, we pray thee, properly and to apply it to our hearts. And we give thee praise through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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