

The Gift of Showing Mercy

by Chuck Smith

The gift of showing mercy is a spiritual gift that allows some people to show mercy to others with cheerfulness, and it is a requirement for Christians.

Scripture: Exodus 34:6, 2 Samuel 22:26, Psalm 103:8, Proverbs 28:13, Micah 6:8, Matthew 5:7, Luke 6:36, Romans 12:8, Hebrews 4:16, James 2:13

Topics: "Character Of God", "Mercy"

Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the necessity of showing mercy as a command from God, contrasting it with justice, which is getting what one deserves. He explains that true mercy should be shown cheerfully, reflecting God's nature, and not with reluctance or guilt. Smith illustrates this through biblical examples, including Job's friends and Jacob's acknowledgment of God's mercy, highlighting that mercy is a gift from God that we are called to extend to others. He stresses that our ability to receive mercy is linked to our willingness to show it to others, as taught by Jesus. Ultimately, the sermon calls believers to embody God's merciful character in their interactions with others.

Transcript

As we continue our study on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we will look at Romans 12:8 where Paul talks about the gift of showing mercy. Now right off the top, we should note that we need to show mercy. Whether we have the gift of showing mercy or not, as we will find in our lesson, exercising mercy is not really an option for it is a command that we be merciful. Paul declares, "He that showeth mercy with cheerfulness."

Now mercy is contrasted with justice, for justice is getting what you deserve. And so many times we say of a person, "Boy, I will tell you, he got exactly what he deserved." That is justice. When you get just what you deserve. But not getting what you deserve is mercy. I deserve justice but God gives me mercy. And so, there is that thought of forgiveness along with the mercy.

We will be talking about the gift of showing mercy and Paul declares that he that showeth mercy should do it with cheerfulness (cf. Romans 12:8). Now thinking about it as a gift, we realize that there are some people who have the gift and some people who do not. There are some people who, as they show mercy, have a somber kind of reluctance: "I wish I could pound you into the ground but, you know, I suppose I have to show mercy."

Others preface their mercy with, "I do not know if we will ever be able to recover from this." And they try to make you feel so guilty and remorseful because they want you to realize how serious your offense was to them. And there is not much cheerfulness involved with the showing of mercy either by the person showing the mercy. And then there surely is not much in the receiving of that kind of mercy, which makes you still feel very guilty and somber for what you have done.

Many years ago when my wife's father died, we went to the funeral home to make arrangements for his services. And as we came into the funeral home, this man (of course in a black suit and a black tie) came up to us and he was sort of wringing his hands and he said, "Maaay I heeelp you?" And the poor fellow had chewed all of his nails off and he was an emotional wreck! And as he was talking to us about the service, he was saying, "Your father, dear, oh my... You are so young a child to lose your father." And he started crying. And I thought, We were handling it pretty well until we met this guy! He was trying to show mercy but there was not much cheerfulness to it.

When Job was going through all of his trials and these friends of his came to comfort him, rather than showing mercy they were seeking to discover the cause of all of his problems. And each one had their theory for why Job was going through all of the suffering and misery that he was experiencing. They accused Job of being a hypocrite. They accused him of being a liar. And they made all kinds of accusations because he refused to acknowledge that they were right in their analysis. They felt that he must be some horrible sinner (guilty of some secret sin that nobody knew about) and that God was not going to let him get by with it.

And so, they believed all of these miseries had come upon Job because of some secret, horrible thing that he was doing or had done. "And God's just not going to let you get by with it," they were saying. And they kept this kind of pressure on him and it built each time there would be the interchange; there would be more accusations and more incriminating statements made against Job. Finally he said, "Miserable comforters are you all! I mean, you do not show me any mercy. You are no help!" (cf. Job 16:2). And he just wished that they would never have come.

And there are some people who come to you ostensibly to show mercy; but by the time they leave, sometimes you wish they had never come because they seem to be so awkward in the showing of mercy.

There are times when you have blown it big time and you feel that your world has come to an end and there is just no reason to try and go on any longer. There are those who come along to show mercy and they are so cheerful and so confident about the future, they can lift you out of your despair. And that is the way we are to show mercy. Not with a somber "Well, I do not know. We will try and work this out together. You know I will always stand with you, brother." But it should be done with cheerfulness:

The Lord is on the throne and we have not seen the end of it yet. God is going to bring us through and we are going to see God's victory. All we have to do is just wait upon the Lord and trust in Him and He is going to bring it out. Yes you did wrong, but thank God He is merciful, He is forgiving, He is kind, and He is loving. And let us go on from here and let us not wallow in the past. Let us wait and see what God has planned.

There is that cheerfulness where you just feel you have been buoyed. You feel lifted up. You feel like, "Yes, I can go on another day and I can see what God has in store." And that is the kind of way that we are to show mercy--with cheerfulness.

Now God is the source of all mercy and comfort. It is not something that we deserve or have coming to us--that is justice. Justice is what we deserve and have coming, but mercy springs from the very character and nature of God.

Jacob realized how unworthy he was of God's mercy. He said, "I am not worthy of the least of His mercies" (Genesis 32:10). And Jacob was right: he was a conniver. His name means "heel catcher" and that is one who takes advantage of another by tripping his heel. And after we look at the story of Jacob, we read in the New Testament where God said, "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13). Now I can understand why God hated Esau. What I cannot understand is why He loved Jacob because Jacob was every bit as conniving as his brother; yet we see God's love for Jacob.

And when Jacob fled from his brother's anger, having deceived his father, he received the blessing that his father wanted to bestow upon Esau. And Esau who was planning justice, said "As soon as Dad dies, I am going to kill that brother of mine. I want justice." So as Isaac was getting sick, Jacob's mother said, "Son, you better get out of here because your brother has vowed to kill you." So Jacob took off fleeing from the anger of his brother Esau. When he crossed the border of the land, all that he possessed was a walking stick, as he was on his way to Babylon.

Now seventeen years later Jacob returned as a wealthy man. He had herds, he had flocks, he had servants, he had wives, and he had children. And as he crossed that little stream again (the border of the land), he remembered seventeen years earlier--the last time he was there. The last time he crossed this stream all he had was a walking stick. Now he had so much. And he realized, "I have been blessed. I do not deserve it." He knew that he was not worthy, saying, "I am not worthy, the least of all of the mercies, and of all of the truth which You have showed to Your servant. For with my staff, or with my walking stick I passed over this Jordan. But now, I have so much I have to divide them into two companies to travel. We cannot travel in just one company. We have to divide it so that we can travel" (cf. Genesis 32:10). Jacob recognized the mercies of God: "I am undeserving and I am unworthy of what God has done."

And as we look at our lives and see what God has done, we realize that it is not something we deserve. Truly, the Lord has been good to us and He has been merciful to us. And the blessings that God has bestowed upon our lives are not the result of our meriting them, but of His mercy toward us. Now there are many Scriptures that describe the mercies of God.

In 2 Corinthians 1:3 Paul said,

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

And so He is called the Father of mercies or the Author of mercies.

Daniel 9:9 says,

To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him.

Lamentations 3:22 says,

It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.

How true that is. It is by the Lord's mercy that we are still here and that we have not been consumed, but His compassions they fail not.

Psalm 116:5 says,

Gracious is the LORD and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

Are you glad?

Numbers 14:18 says,

The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression.

Deuteronomy 4:31 says,

For the LORD thy God is a merciful God; he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swear unto them.

He is a merciful God.

Nehemiah 9:31 says,

Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake, thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God.

And of course, we so often see the grace of God coupled with the mercy of God. And as we said, "Justice is getting what you deserve. Mercy is not getting what you deserve. And grace is getting what you do not deserve." Grace is God's blessings poured out upon you, unmerited and undeserved. We are totally unworthy, but God just pours out His love and grace upon us.

Now mercy is a part of God's nature. God met Moses on the mount when Moses returned to again receive the tables of law, having broken the first tables. He returned back to the mountain and it says,

And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. (Exodus 34:5-6)

Now compare this description that God gives Himself with what so many people think of God--people whose opinions have been largely formed by Satan's lies. People have such a wrong concept of God. And these concepts of God are something that Satan is constantly foisting on people, for he is constantly misrepresenting God.

For so many years growing up, I felt that God was angry with me most of the time because I knew what He wanted of me and I knew how He wanted me to live. I knew that He wanted perfection and I was far from perfect. I was a quite normal human being, living in the flesh; but I knew what God deserved. And so, I always imagined that God was angry with me and I never questioned why anything wrong ever happened in my life because I figured it was the judgment of God--that I deserved it.

Now let me read God's description of Himself again, and as I read it, does this match with what you have in your mind concerning God? Listen as God describes Himself.

"The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."
(Exodus 34:6)

That is the God we serve. I am glad that I serve Him. The Bible describes the vastness of God's mercy. It says,

The Lord He is merciful and gracious slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. (Psalm 103:8)

Psalm 103:11 says,

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

Now it used to trouble me that the astronomers were constantly revising their estimation of the size of the universe. When I was in high school, in our science classes we were taught that the earth or the universe was four billion light years in radius. Then as I was doing some post-graduate work in college and studying a little bit on astronomy, they were teaching us that the earth was twelve billion light years in radius. And now, some of the science magazines like Discover that I have been reading of late indicate that the universe is fifteen billion light years in radius.

The whole thing is premised upon the Big Bang Theory that at one time all of the mass of the universe was tightly compacted in a ball. And then there was a big bang, a big explosion. And because they said certain galaxies are nearly four billion light years away, that is how old the earth is--four billion years. Because of the explosion, they were pushed outwards a distance of twelve and now fifteen billion light years. You say, "Does it bother you that they are constantly revising and saying the universe is bigger than we thought?" No, it does not bother me. It excites me because "as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high is His mercy." And I can use the fifteen billion light years of His mercy! I can handle that--it sort of makes me comfortable.

In Psalm 103:17 it says,

But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.

You know the other measurement is distance out, but now this is distance of breadth. So it catches you on both perimeters; back to the vanishing point and out to the vanishing point--it is always there.

Ephesians 2:4 says,

But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.

So we serve a merciful God and He plants His nature in us as He conforms us into His nature. One of the characteristics that manifests and really is a proof that I am a child of God is when I begin to take on the nature of God--that nature of being merciful. And so, we are commanded in the Scriptures to be merciful.

In Luke 6:36 says,

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

In other words, you are to take on this characteristic of God's nature. Being a child of God, you are to be merciful just as your Father also is merciful. So, God is our example in showing mercy. We are to be as our Father and He sets the standard for us. Now what does the Scripture tell us about the mercy of God

and the standard that God has set? It says, "He is rich in mercy. His mercy endureth forever. His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. His mercies are manifold. He has great mercy. He is plenteous in mercy and He delights in mercy."

Oh, I do not suppose you will understand that kind of mercy until you are a grandparent and are delighting in mercy. Oh, how I love to intercede for my grandkids. You know, when they are at odds with their parents and I will say, "Well, let me just take them for a walk." And I get them out of that spanking and walk with them and just delight in mercy. It is just glorious! But showing mercy is not an option, it is a requirement.

Micah 6:8 says,

He hath showed thee O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy.

This is a requirement: be honest, be fair, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.

Zechariah 7:9 says,

Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, "Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother."

Be fair and show mercy to every man and compassion to your brothers.

Now Jesus seemed to link our showing mercy to our receiving mercy. And many of the graces God bestows upon us are often tied to our bestowing those same graces on others. As we mentioned recently concerning forgiveness, we are told that God is the standard or the measure for forgiveness.

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

But then we are also informed that if we do not forgive men their trespasses against us, neither will our heavenly Father forgive our trespasses. And so our being forgiven was related to our being forgiving. So it is with mercy: our receiving mercy is tied by Jesus to our being merciful.

In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:7, Jesus said,

Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.

This seems to be born out in the Old Testament in 2 Samuel 22:26, which says,

With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright.

So God shows Himself merciful to those who are merciful. And this is the heavy-duty part: we actually set the standard for the measurement for our own judgment. In whatsoever measure you mete it out, as far as judging another, that is the same measurement by which you will be judged.

Now we are so merciful when it comes to ourselves--to the forgiving of ourselves for what we have done that we know to be wrong. And we are always ready to give a justification for what we have done. Somehow that is just a part of the human nature, I guess. We are clever at making excuses and rationalizing our behavior and our actions. But often when we see someone else doing the very same thing, we are so critical. We are ready to string them up. We are ready to call the lynch mob, "Do you know

what they did?"

Now in judging others, you are actually setting the standard by which God will one day judge you. That is why I like to be very merciful, because when I stand before God I want Him to be very merciful to me. And so, we set the standards by which we will ultimately be judged.

James 2:13 says,

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.

That is pretty heavy, isn't it? When you stand before God, if you have not shown mercy, then He will judge you without mercy. Now can you handle that? Do you want to face that? Not me! And that is why being merciful is such an important thing in my life.

Matthew 7:2 says,

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Another verse that we cannot repeat too often is,

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. (Matthew 5:7)

Now to whom is God's mercy revealed or manifested?

Deuteronomy 5:10 says,

And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

So God is merciful towards those who love Him and keep His commandments.

In Daniel 9:4, picking up on this, he prayed unto the Lord,

And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments.

This was of course, both in Deuteronomy and in Exodus, as well as and in Daniel's prayer, as he was praying that God would be merciful and return the people from their captivity. He was again acknowledging that this is God's character, being merciful to those who love Him and keep His commandments. It is interesting that Daniel incorporated this in his prayer.

And later on, when the Israelites were returning from captivity and Nehemiah was coming back to encourage and to lead the rebuilding of the wall in Jerusalem, Nehemiah also picked up on this same characteristic of God, which is manifested or declared in Deuteronomy and Exodus.

And Nehemiah said,

I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments.

So he picked up on the very prayer of Daniel and the very Scripture that Daniel used in his prayer.

God's mercy is shown towards those who walk before Him with all their hearts.

1 Kings 8:23 says,

LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart.

God has such mercy toward those who love Him and keep His commandments and those who walk before God with all of their heart. It does not mean we are perfect, or that we never stumble, or that we do not get angry. It does not mean anything like that at all. It just means my heart is towards God; I love God and I want to walk in His commandments. I want to do what pleases Him. And when I fail and when I come short, God is merciful because He knows I love Him. And thus, these are the ones to whom God shows His mercy--He shows His mercy to those who will come before His throne of grace.

Hebrews 4:16 says,

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

So, as we come to God before that throne of grace, we obtain mercy, and then of course, His mercy is towards those who are merciful.

2 Samuel 22:26 says,

With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful.

And then He shows His mercy to those that call upon Him.

Psalms 86:5 says,

For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

So, we can call upon God because He is plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Him. And of course, David called upon the Lord for mercy in his time of need. When he had sinned in taking Bathsheba and the prophet had come to him and declared his guilt, David prayed:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. (Psalm 51:1)

So He is merciful to those that call upon Him and David called upon Him and obtained mercy.

God is merciful towards those that fear Him.

Psalm 103:11 says.

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

And then, God's mercy is towards those who confess and forsake their sins.

Proverbs 28:13 says,

He who covers his sin shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

It is a promise of God--we shall have mercy.

Now I trust that you noted, as we were going through these passages of Scripture referring to the mercies of God, and the compassion of God, and the graciousness of God, that there actually were more Scriptures from the Old Testament speaking of these characteristics of God than there were from the New Testament. And I point that out to bring up a common fallacy that people often have and that is that somehow the Bible reveals two Gods to us--the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament.

And sometimes you will hear people even say, "Well, I have a little trouble with the God of the Old Testament. I sort of like the God of the New Testament. I like this love bit, you know. But boy, you know..." And they think of the God of the Old Testament as being one of wrath, judgment, thunder, fire, and destruction. Whereas, when they think of the God of the New Testament, they think of John 3:16, which says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son."

But you find in the Old Testament the revelation of the mercy of God, the revelation of the grace of God, and the longsuffering and the patience of God. In fact, what a tremendous illustration the Jewish nation is of the patience, and the mercy, and the longsuffering of God. And yes, man's sin, and man's rebellion, and man's disobedience against God produced the fruit of his doings; and so the wars, and the pain, and the suffering, and the judgment came because they had forsaken the Lord.

Now the New Testament also reveals the love, the patience, the mercy, and the grace of God in a very beautiful way. But also the New Testament reveals the judgment of God that is going to come against all unrighteousness and the ungodliness of men who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness. The wrath of God will be revealed from heaven. And when you get to the Book of Revelation, chapters 6 through 18, you follow the judgments of God that are coming upon the earth. There is just as heavy a judgment--in fact judgments that are yet in the future will be even greater than anything man has experienced in his past.

So, do not get this idea that there is the Old Testament concept of God which is different from the New Testament concept of God. They both show the grace, the mercy, the kindness, the love, the goodness, the patience, and the forgiveness of God to those who will call upon Him-- those who will seek Him and to those who have a heart towards Him. And both the New and Old Testaments show the ultimate consequences of those who have walked away from God, who rebel against the law of God, and who do the self-destructive things that God has warned us against. And it reveals the consequences of a life that is lived in rebellion against God. But the Old and New Testaments both reveal the one and same God.

Now, as we relate to God, we relate to Him in one of two ways: as a friend and servant of God seeking to do His will, or as a rebel against God doing our own will. In seeking to relate to God in love and in a loving relationship of submission, we experience then His glorious grace, goodness, forgiveness, kindness, and blessing. But then having received these, it is imperative that we show these same characteristics to others that, we might become merciful even as God has been merciful to us and that we are forgiving, even as God is forgiving to us. We show these things so that we are kind even as God is kind to us, that we are gracious even as God has been gracious to us, that we are patient even as God has been patient to us. And so, these very characteristics that mark the nature of God are the same characteristics that He wants to mark in your nature--loving, kind, and forgiving.

Now I wonder why this upsets the world so much that they want to bash believers? You know these are the characteristics that we are seeking to emulate. But Jesus said, "Marvel not that the world hates you. It

hated Me. And the servant is not greater than his lord. If they did not receive Me, they are not going to receive you" (cf. John 15:18-20).

And so, we realize more and more that we are living in a world that is in an antagonistic position towards God. And as we seek to walk with God, it puts us at odds with the world.

But then we have to be careful because our old nature comes in--that nature of wanting to treat in kind. "You make remarks about me? All right, I will make remarks about you. You think you are so good? I will tell you..." And we want to respond in kind, which is exactly what we are not to do. We are to be merciful. We are to be tender. We are to be kind. We are to be forgiving. God help us. It is a big order, but we can do it through the anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit.

That is what the Holy Spirit is all about--doing for you what you cannot do for yourself. He is transforming that nature of the flesh and bringing you into the realm of the Spirit-- walking in the Spirit and living in the Spirit. It is the Spirit of God dwelling in you, conforming you now, and making you like God. And so, may the Spirit of God move in our hearts to mold us, to make us after His will, while we are waiting, yielded, and still.

Shall we pray?

Thank You, Father, for Your patience with us. As You are working in us, Lord, we realize that so many times the clay has been marred in the hands of the potter and it seems like You have to start over again. But Lord, we thank You that You are so patient. And how many times You have sort of started over again, to make a vessel that You can use for Your purposes--a vessel fit for the Master's use. And Lord, that is exactly what we desire to be--instruments, Lord, through which You can work and vessels that bring glory and honor unto You. And so, Father, we just commit ourselves afresh to the anointing of Your Holy Spirit, to the filling of Your Spirit, and to the empowering of Your Spirit. We recognize, Lord, our own human frailties and our own weaknesses. Lord, we yield ourselves to the fullness of that Spirit--Your Spirit. That He might indeed give us power to be Your witnesses throughout the world in which we live. Help us, Lord. Fill us, Lord. Make us Your instruments, Lord, to bring Your love and Your peace, Your beauty, Your grace, and Your mercy to a world that needs it so desperately. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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