

A Vessel of Mercy

by James Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a vessel of mercy, prepared in advance for glory, and the consequences of not receiving God's mercy.

Topics: "Divine Mercy", "Sanctification"

Description

James Smith preaches about the vessels of mercy, who are distinct from the world and set apart for the Lord, chosen to show forth His praises. These vessels, prepared in advance for glory, were once unworthy and guilty but were redeemed by the perfect obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Mercy, with tender compassion, saves and transforms these vessels, making them fit for the Master's use and adorning the temple of mercy. Through trials and purifying processes, Mercy brightens and polishes these vessels, preparing them to shine in God's kingdom forever.

Transcript

"That God might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory, even us whom he has called, not of the Jews only--but also of the Gentiles." Romans 9:23, 24

The Holy Spirit has employed a variety of titles to set forth the character, and describe the privileges of the Lord's people; they are always represented as distinct from the world--and peculiarly set apart for the Lord. They are in the midst of many people--but are distinct from all people; they are said to be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that they should show forth the praises, or exhibit the virtues of him who has called them out of darkness into marvelous light. They are viewed as a new creation, are claimed as Jehovah's first fruits, and are commanded to imitate God as dear children. They are to represent Jesus on earth, who represents them in Heaven; and to be witnesses for God in their day and generation.

Among other titles given them we find them called "Vessels of Mercy," and they are said to be prepared in advance for glory.

Mercy set them apart for her use, before sin cast them out among the ruins of creation. And though they lay long undistinguished in the common mass of filth, wretchedness, and misery; yet mercy never surrenders her right, nor can be induced to give up her claims. Justice passed sentence upon them in common with the rest of mankind, and they were liable to be seized and punished as children of wrath, for

in their state and character there was no difference. They possessed the same corrupt and depraved nature, they were guilty of the same crimes, and were justly sentenced to the same punishment.

But the eye of mercy still lingered over the objects of her choice, she could distinguish them as they lay among the heap of ruins; and a most surprising question seemed to fill her thoughts and heave her tender bosom, "How can I give you up?" They were unworthy of her notice, and unfit for any holy service; they were cast out as vessels in whom there was no pleasure, and in this state they were long seen to lay. At length, mercy brought forth her stores, mustered her armies, sent forth her first born, and expressed her determination, "You have sold yourselves for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money."

In accordance with this determination, in the fullness of time the WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us; he was made under the law to redeem those who were under the law; and to give his life a ransom for many. The demands of justice were ascertained, that all which it demanded, might be given. For though mercy was bent upon her purpose, she would not even accept of freedom for her objects--but upon the most honorable terms. A perfect obedience to the holy law was demanded, and the payment of its awful penalty was required. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested; and while wearing the nature that sinned, to obey; he possessed all the fullness of the Godhead, to satisfy; he obeyed the law perfectly and satisfied its claims completely. The righteousness he presented was divine, and the price he paid was infinite!

Justice received the ransom and testified satisfaction, while Mercy mounted the throne and triumphed in her success. The vessels were now legally ransomed, and may be lawfully claimed. They had become the purchased property of the Prince of Life, being bought with a price; the price of his service and death. That the title was good, the great lawgiver testified, for when the purchaser entered Heaven he was greeted with songs, and the Father proclaimed, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power."

In pursuance of her plan, Mercy sends forth her heralds--they proclaim in every direction the glory of her character, and the grandeur of her design; they lift up their voices like trumpets and spread abroad the savor of her knowledge in every place. The Holy Spirit is engaged to attend her ambassadors, and make their word effectual to the accomplishment of her designs. His energy accompanies their feeble endeavors, making the word living and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword, and directing it to the hearts of the heirs of salvation.

Conviction in an almost infinite variety of ways is produced in the heart, knowledge is conveyed to the understanding, and a serious concern characterizes the soul. Salvation appears to be the only desirable object--and is therefore sought; sin is discovered to be the great cause of danger and alarm--and is therefore feared, confessed, and forsaken. Mercy is now in her element. To behold the sinner weeping under the sense of his sin, panting for pardon at the footstool of God, and groaning for liberty, peace, and salvation; fills the bosom of mercy with inexpressible delight. The miserable sinner lamenting after God is the object that of all others--catches her eye, affects her heart, and opens her resources. Such a one cannot cry and be disregarded, approach the throne and be overlooked, or seek and meet with a denial. Mercy knows not how to deny when the suppliant confesses, or to refuse when the penitent pleads. In the tearful eye, the heaving breast, and the throbbing bosom of the praying soul; Mercy beholds her own image, reads the partial accomplishment of her purpose, and the fulfillment of the promise of the Father. She says, "You Are Mine. No good thing will I withhold. I delight to bestow."

She communicates her favors as wisdom directs: pardon is given; peace is realized; liberty is enjoyed; fellowship with God is experienced; the man has passed from death unto life, and sings with a joyful heart, "i have obtained Mercy!"

The heart now becomes Mercy's home; she claims the affections for her throne, and demands every faculty to be devoted to her service, and employed to her praise. She rejoices over the conquered one--and triumphs in her right. The work of renovation is begun with a determination that it shall be completed, and that when completed it shall reflect glory upon all the attributes of God throughout eternity. Mercy is the delight and song of the soul, and the soul is the object of Mercy's pleasure and joy: for the Lord takes pleasure in his people--and he will beautify the meek with salvation. The vessel is now taken from among the ruins, and is washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. It is fitted and prepared for the Master's use, a vessel which shall be found unto praise, and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

It may now well be called "A Vessel of Mercy," all the difference there is between it and the vessels of wrath, is produced by mercy: for according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Mercy made it what it is, and mercy preserves it from apostatizing to its former fearful state. It is now named from its contents, it has received mercy; and from its designation, it is designed to be employed in, and to deck the temple of mercy for evermore. It is distinguished from all around as peculiar, and never will be again mixed up with those who are appointed to wrath.

This is God's purpose, and the soul's prayer is in accordance, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with wicked men."

Mercy employs a number of workmen to brighten and polish her vessels; many of them are exceedingly unsightly and appear at first view unmerciful--but all their operations are directed to benefit the soul. Paul had many of them employed about his person--but he discovered that each was producing something desirable, hence he says, "Tribulation produces patience; patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." The foreman is a rough, uncouth, iron-handed workman; but he is an adept at his business, and therefore every vessel of mercy passes through his hands. The Master himself has said, "You shall have tribulation." And the servant has declared, "It is through much tribulation, that we must enter into the kingdom of God." Fear not therefore my poor tried brother. "Our light affliction which is but for a moment works out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

The Purifier puts every vessel into the furnace, and himself superintends the process: he allows nothing to be consumed but the dross, and this he will purge from them. They often object to his manner of dealing with them--but he says, "I will purge away your dross in the furnace, and will take away all your alloy." Some of the vessels appear as if they were penetrated with filth, and mixed up with defilement, and of them he says, "I will melt them and purify them--for how shall I part with them." He will not give them up, nor give over the purifying process, until he has accomplished in them all the good pleasure of his goodness. He is determined to make them spotless and pure, that they may shine as the sun in his kingdom forever.

He melts them by trying dispensations and sanctifying operations; he casts them into the mold of his word, stamps upon them the beauties of holiness, and causes them to show forth his praise. They are then dedicated to his service, filled with his Spirit, and acknowledged as his property. His name is engraved on

them, his graces shine in them, and they are holiness unto the Lord.

Reader--are you a vessel of mercy? have you ardently sought, and experimentally obtained mercy? are you looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life? Remember if you are not a vessel of mercy--then you are a vessel of wrath; if not found in the hands of mercy--then you will be found at last in the hands of an angry God. Unless you are prepared for Heaven by sanctification, your certain doom is eternal damnation! There is no alternative; no intermediate; it must be mercy--or wrath; Heaven--or Hell. If you have received mercy--you know something about it: you can remember that you felt your need of it, earnestly sought it by prayer and supplication, and at last obtained it to your joy, peace, and satisfaction.

But if you have not received mercy--you are still under wrath, every threatening in God's book is pointed at you, the vials of indignation are ready to be poured out upon you! An angel may tremble at your danger, and a devil dread your doom! There is no safety for a sinner but beneath the wing of mercy. To that wing, you are invited, before you in the gospel it is spread, and you are urged to flee to it as the hope set before you, to shelter beneath it from the wrath that is to come. If found outside of Christ, God will crush you with a rod of iron, and at last dash you to pieces as a potter's vessel. He will destroy your hopes, confound your projects, and fill you with everlasting misery and woe. O flee to Jesus, he will be merciful to your unrighteousness; he will have mercy upon you, and abundantly pardon!

But is my reader a vessel of mercy? O then rejoice and be exceedingly glad; your state is a happy state, your prospects are unspeakably glorious! Be mindful of your obligations to your God and Savior; he bought you with his own blood, that you may serve him in righteousness and holiness all the days of your life. For your life--he gave his own, and for your comfort--he gave his word: he invites you to walk in fellowship with him, and expects you to glorify him in your body, soul, and spirit which are his.

O love not the world--it is his enemy;

trifle not with sin--it goes to his heart;

listen not to Satan--he intends to beguile you!

Believe your Savior's word, adorn your holy profession, and walk humbly with God. Often meditate upon the question, "Who made you to differ from another?" Often admire the grace which put you among God's children, and wrote your name in the Lamb's book of life. Often anticipate the period when mercy shall put a crown of glory upon your head, and the joy you will feel in casting it at your Savior's feet. Depend upon mercy to keep you from fainting, to supply all your needs, to relieve your distresses, and to fill you with all the fullness of God; let mercy be your satisfying portion and your delightful song in the house of your pilgrimage. Look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life; he will soon come a second time without sin unto salvation; and then he will collect all his vessels of mercy together, and so shall they be forever with the Lord.

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