

Covenant Mercy

by Thomas Bradbury

God's mercy is a sovereign act of His will, consistent with His truth and justice, and is abundant, varied, and perfect.

Scripture: Psalm 51:1, Psalm 62:12, Psalm 89:1, Psalm 101:1, Jeremiah 31:20, Lamentations 3:22, Romans 9:15, Romans 12:1, Hebrews 8:12

Topics: "Gods Mercy", "Sovereign Grace"

Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches on the profound subject of God's mercy, emphasizing that it is not by human will or effort but by God's sovereign choice to show mercy and compassion. He delves into the richness of God's mercy as revealed throughout the Bible, highlighting how mercy is experienced through the Father's will, the Savior's grace, and the Spirit's revelation. Bradbury reflects on the theme of mercy in the book of Romans, showcasing how mercy is displayed in various forms to meet the needs of God's chosen people in different life situations. He expounds on the sovereignty of God's mercy, explaining that it is a divine attribute that is multitudinous, tender, and sure, bestowed upon those whom God has prepared for glory.

Transcript

"For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." (Romans 9:15,16)

WE have a very searching and solemn subject before us this morning. May it not incite us to any indulgence in controversy, though those of us who are taught of God are quite prepared to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. For myself I would rather hold a little communion with the recipients of covenant mercy, than enjoy the pleasure of religious worldlings. In such communion we enjoy a clean lift out of the miseries which are sure to attach themselves to us as long as we are in the flesh. This must be so as a matter of course according to the truth we have confessed this morning, which once flowed from the heart and pen of the apostle Paul, "For I know that in me that is, in the flesh dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Romans 7:18) Since there is nothing good in me there must be everything to call forth the righteous indignation and eternal wrath of a sin-hating God upon me, and this certainly would be the case were it not that He is the God of love, and has pledged His very existence for the salvation of His people, so sweetly revealed in His Holy Book and opened up to the heart by the grace and power of His indwelling Spirit.

The theme occupying my mind for some days past is that of mercy. Mercy! This we find in every part of Divine inspiration. We love to see it in the Book we delight to feel it in our hearts, with the firm persuasion that it is experienced there wholly of the Father's will and good pleasure, the Saviour's grace and mediation, and by the revelation of these to our hearts by the Glorifier of God's Christ God the Holy Ghost. "I will sing of mercy and judgment," said the Psalmist, "unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing." (Ps. 101:1) And if some of us live until tomorrow we shall read, no doubt, that blessed new covenant psalm, the 89th, beginning with mercy, flowing with mercy, concluding with mercy, with mercy which never ends. See how mercy is extolled in that 136th Psalm. There at the end of every verse twenty-six times we find ourselves refreshed with mercy, delivered with mercy, preserved, with mercy, guided by mercy, remembered in mercy, redeemed with mercy, fed with mercy, overcome with mercy. "His mercy endureth for ever." I love to sing

"A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing,
Nor fear with Thy righteousness on,
My person and offerings to bring;
The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view."

If you were to ask me, as I have been asked, What inscription would you like on the stone over your grave? I answer, Simply my name the date of my birth, that of my departure, and the, those blessed words I have quoted for you from Toplady,

"The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view."

This is my choice because it would be a statement of the gospel of the grace of God to every looker on. How marvellously good God has been to me, and to many of us here present, to exercise our spirits daily with a sweet sense of His mercy! For many long years Stocker's words have frequently warmed my heart

"Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolved by Thy goodness I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I found."

Now the epistle before us overflows with mercy. This you will see in Paul's reasoning in Chap. 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." There we have not only mercy, but mercies. Manifold mercies, multiplied mercies, multitudinous mercies. Mercies producing self-sacrifice and holy living. Yes, mercy is seen in every chapter of this epistle. In each, mercy appears in a different phase. mercy is displayed in different features, mercy suited to every state and condition of the life of God in elect, redeemed, and regenerate men. Mercy helpful in times of adversity to preserve me from despondency and despair, and mercy humbling in times of prosperity to keep me from presumption and pride. We are queer creatures. There is no doing any good with us, either in prosperity or adversity, only as the God of all grace is pleased to bring His blessings and needful ballast, and to rule us according to the riches of His grace abounding toward us in all wisdom and prudence.

The chapter before us is a blessed revelation of God's sovereign mercy. Many do not like it. Well, never mind, we have nothing to do with such this morning. God has been pleased to leave them, and to bring us into the secret of His presence to unfold to us His purpose of grace and salvation to bless us with a little communion and fellowship with Himself to keep us humble at His sacred feet, not desiring to question His right to do as He will with His own, but acknowledging His righteousness in disposing of His creatures according to His unerring wisdom, and the distribution of His gifts according to His matchless skill. Notice the sovereignty of God's mercy as set forth in the 18th and following verses, "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth." Carnal wisdom says, "O, I cannot do with that!" Well, we have nothing to do with man's wisdom in spiritual matters; but with that which God is pleased to reveal to us by His Word and Spirit. "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hath Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another to dishonour?" That is quite right.

Mercy! What is it? I have endeavoured to point out to you many times that according to the character and state of the persons upon whom God bestows His favour, so is the favour described in the Book. In the writings of John we find that "God is love," and the church is lovely in Him. He is love from eternal ages to eternal ages. Love shown to His Own in covenant is as He saw them in the Person, perfection, and loveliness of Christ, eternally, unchangeably, unceasingly one with Him.

"Betrothed in love, ere time began,

His blood-bought bride with Jesus see;

Made by eternal union ONE,

Who was, and is, and is to be."

Through eternal ages covenant love is the inalienable lot of all the election of grace. What! When we fell in Adam? Yes, for then we fell not from His love, nor from His care and attention. Certainly, we fell from that state of creature perfection which we had with Adam in his primitive innocency; but we fell not from our Covenant Father's concern and love. This loving concern He manifested in a marvellous manner in Eden as described in Gen. 3. When our first parents would flee from God in shame and disgrace, they found it an impossibility to get away from God. They might try to hide themselves behind the trees of the garden, but God's "Where art thou?" brought them before Him miserable objects to listen to His declaration of war. Declaration of war? Yes. Against the guilty sinners before Him? No; but against the Serpent and His

brood. Listen! "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel," (Gen. 3:15) in this, Satan and His seed received the sentence of righteous judgment, while the sound of sovereign mercy greeted the ears of the fallen and the miserable. Look at mercy magnifying itself. For them the Lord God made coats of skins. A gracious covering which was theirs through sacrifice. So the obedience or righteousness of Jesus is ours through His life of self-sacrifice His obedience unto death His obedience learned by the things which he suffered. (Heb. 5:8; Phil. 2:8) We think too little of Rom. 5:19, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." Adam the first fell, and all his posterity fell in him, Adam the Last stood firm in the midst of shaking things, and all His seed stand firm and unshaken in Him. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," (Rom. 3:23) and it is no mean mercy to know it as the truth of the Book, true in the heart by the Spirit of truth, thus bringing us into fellowship with God in contrition, confession, communication, communion, and gracious consummation.

The manifestation of God's love to unworthy ones is GRACE. Grace always has respect to unworthiness. When God reveals His love to His own in misery, that is MERCY, mercy always has respect to misery. This is illustrated in the Litany and Liturgy of almost every church needing them. To a scriptural liturgy I have no objection. I hesitate not to use words which God has provided for me in the Bible, hymn book, or prayer book. A blessed thing it is for me to enjoy words of His own giving which have flowed from the exercised hearts of His own Spirit-taught children, and which truly express the desires of my heart at the throne of His heavenly grace. Here you prove Him to be to you "the God of all grace." Here you delight in Him as the Father of mercies. Here as you smite upon your breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," you rejoice in His company as a forgiving God "the God of all comfort." As He reveals Himself to us in loving forbearance we know Him as the God of patience, and as He reconciles us to Himself by the blood of His Son we bless Him as the very God of peace.

As a Sovereign He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Could the vail which hides the heavenly country from our view be drawn aside, and we by faith behold the redeemed nearest to the throne. Mercy brought and placed them there. But the elect angels know nothing of mercy, while they rejoice in His goodness through Jesus Christ. Yes, that same Jesus Who suffered, bled and died for elect vessels of mercy is the Lord of the angels the Upholder of the angels the Commander of the angels, and these wait His commands and are obedient to the voice of His word. But they enjoy not the sweets of redeeming mercy. Why not? Because they have never been miserable. Why have they never been miserable? Because they have never sinned. Why have they never sinned? Because sovereign goodness kept them from sinning. Sinners of mortal race have been singled out to enjoy the riches of saving and sustaining mercy. According to His purpose they are brought to know themselves sinners before Him to experience the burden, plague and power of sin to know and feel every one his own sore, and his own grief, and the plague of his own heart, and open up this misery to a merciful God, and find mercy in full and frank forgiveness and gracious acceptance by love, blood, and power.

But here we discover a glorious aspect of sovereign mercy. While angels enjoy His goodness, and elect men, favoured sinners are participators of His mercy, elect angels need it not, and fallen spirits enjoy it not. The living children of the living God, sinners redeemed by precious blood, the companions of the Lamb in a miserable world, are brought into the sweet experience of it. This mercy flows through the incarnation, obedience, bloodshedding, and intercession of the Great and Glorious Head of the church, the Surety of the everlasting covenant of grace, Who was faithful to Him that appointed him, (Heb. 3:2) the Good Shepherd Who was smitten on the behalf of His sheep. Many, very many, think it fit and proper to

style mercy, "God's darling attribute" God's most lovely attribute. I call it nothing of the kind, for God will not allow me to do so. I believe in my very heart of hearts before Him that He has no darling attribute. God's attributes are not like the legs of the lame, unequal, nor like a parable in the mouth of fools; but all of them gloriously harmonize in the Person of the Illustrious Sufferer on Calvary's tree the Ascended Saviour at God's right hand. This you see in that blessed 85th Psalm, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other," or, have embraced each other in natural affectionate agreement. God's mercy is displayed consistent with His truth, truth which revealed in the law threatens our destruction, but truth in the gospel declares our peace and safety compatible with His righteousness or justice. Yes, the attributes of God are perfectly agreed they thoroughly harmonize in the work of our salvation. Justice is not against mercy, and mercy interferes not with justice. "Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful," (Ps. 116:5) yet, He is "a just God and a Saviour." (Isa. 45:21) He is ever to us a God of love: while, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) Here faith beholds our God in Christ merciful, righteous, faithful, true, compassionate, kind, all-wise, all-powerful. All His attributes combine and work harmoniously together in the accomplishment and revelation to God's elect, of their salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

See how jubilant the psalmist is as he speaks of the mercies of God at the commencement of that new covenant psalm, the 89th, "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever; with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens." (Ps. 89:1,2) When we are led to examine minutely this blessed subject we see that God in revealing His covenant mercy does so in the plural number.

The singular is too poor for Him, neither is it sufficient for the cravings of those who hang upon Him for everything. God knew our wants, and ignorance, and in His merciful kindness He is pleased to set before us His sovereign mercy in its plurality, variety, abundance, and perfection. Come to the 9th of Nehemiah, a chapter abounding with mercies. It reveals to us what the people of God were, are, and ever will be down here. While they are in the flesh sinners they will be, yet sinners saved by sovereign mercy and washed with covenant blood.

Some people talk of growing better. Did Israel of old grow better? Ask Moses. "For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you." (Deut. 31:29) He knew that they would go from bad to worse; but He also knew that the Father of Mercies would appear increasingly glorious in the estimation of every recipient of His covenant mercy. Now read Nehemiah 9:17, "They refused to obey, neither were mindful of Thy wonders that Thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage; but Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations; yet Thou, in Thy MANIFOLD MERCIES forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go." You see, God Himself would reveal to them the way God Himself would lead them in the way God Himself would keep them in the way.

If He revealed not the way, in it they could not be found. If He led them not in the way, they must stumble and stray. If he kept them not in the way, they must perish everlastingly. There is no mistake at all about

that. Let us read a little farther on "So the children went in and possessed the land." Surely they will behave themselves properly now! With everything a Bountiful Provider could bestow upon them will they not be grateful? Listen! "They delighted themselves in Thy great goodness.

Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets, which testified against them to turn them to Thee; and they wrought great provocations. Therefore Thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them; and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto Thee, Thou heardest them from heaven; and according to Thy MANIFOLD MERCIES Thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hands of their enemies."

Come to the 30th and 31st verses "Yet many years didst Thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by Thy Spirit in Thy prophets; yet would they not give ear; therefore gavest Thou them into the hand of the people of the lands; nevertheless" I like that word "Nevertheless for Thy GREAT MERCIES' sake Thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for Thou art a gracious and MERCIFUL God." Look at that! Great and manifold mercies. Our God keeping covenant and mercy.

But what is the meaning of that word, "manifold?" The popular mode of explaining it is by referring to the many folds of a piece of new cloth requiring repeated unfoldings. But that falls far short of the fullness of meaning hidden in this precious word. It means variegated, prismatic, many coloured. Look at the sun's brightness upon the rain in a summer shower. There you have colours many yet all beautifully blending. So in mercies manifold we have revealed to us mercies of every colour, hue, tint, and shade.

Mercy for every elect and redeemed sinner whatever his state or condition may be. Mercy safe and secure in Christ Jesus to be communicated by His all bountiful hand, moved by His heart of eternal love. May we be led to look through His book of sovereign mercy, and mark well the calls, claims, and entreaties for His mercy recorded there. Do you ever hear of His turning a deaf ear to an importunate call upon Him for mercy through His wounds and blood? Do you ever find Jesus Christ turning away from Him any poor, broken-hearted sinner? No! Such a scene can never be witnessed. You cannot find a broken heart turning to Christ, and Christ indifferent to its misery.

Let us return to David. When judgment was rife upon Israel because of his sin in numbering the people, he said to Gad, "I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hands of the LORD; for VERY GREAT ARE HIS MERCIES: but let me not fall into the hands of man." (1 Chron. 21:13) His mercies are great in number innumerable. They are great in length enduring for ever. They are great in breadth covering all our miseries. They are great in height reaching to the clouds to the throne of God. They are great in depth underlying all the sins, follies and falls of all the election of grace. God's sovereign mercy is like Himself infinite, immeasurable, unsearchable! We cannot recount them we cannot keep pace with them; but they keep pace with us, "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so GREAT IS HIS MERCY toward them that fear Him." When we are faded, withered, and forgotten down here, we shall prove that "THE MERCY OF THE LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him to such as keep His covenant." (Ps. 103:17,18)

Mercies multitudinous! Turn to Ps. 51:1, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness, according to the MULTITUDE OF THY TENDER MERCIES blot out my transgressions." How many? Mercies in multitudes. There is something exceedingly precious in noticing the nature of these mercies tender mercies flowing from the heart of our own God touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and knowing all our temptations, trials, tribulations, and troubles, through which He is bringing us to His own

sweet home of love. Those who have once experienced His mercy, will long to experience it again. Those who have enjoyed it will never be satisfied without it until mercy will be no longer needed, in the land far away from sin, suffering and sorrow. O how blessed it is to know that mercy always comes at the right time according to covenant purpose, and in answer to the petitions of those who are miserable sinners indeed. Felt distance from Him we love is a prolific source of misery. David knew this when he cried, "Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord; even Thy salvation, according to Thy word." (Ps. 119:41) It may be that some poor child of God here present is on the lookout for the manifestation of God's mercies, but they appear not. Others indicate their reception of them by the bright smile of welcome which accompanies forgiveness, justification, and acceptance, while the longing soul sighs "Come also unto me come also unto me." Mercies are always according to God's word and purpose. And what a blessed thing it is to know that they are sure and certain in God's time and manner. See Isa. 55:3, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the SURE MERCIES of David." Are these mercies precious to our souls? Then this is proof positive that God has covenanted with us in the Person of His Son, and by the witness and seal of His Indwelling Spirit. That these are the sure mercies of the Beloved we have the testimony of Paul in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, as recorded in Acts 13:34. Covenant mercies are all through, by, with, and in Jesus Christ.

Then notice, covenant mercy has provided for every necessity, keeps me out of hell, brings me near to God, protects me from all dangers, and preserves me in every season of temptation and trouble. That is a precious word to me in Ps. 40:11. I like it! It once came with sweetness to my heart from the lips of dear old George Davis, "Withhold not Thou Thy TENDER MERCIES from me, O LORD: let Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth continually preserve me." Now let us notice that blessed Scripture, and would to God we could think of it every day of our lives in association with loved ones whom we cannot love much longer here below "It is of the LORD'S MERCIES that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." (Lam. 3:22) As I walk through this London of ours, I see poor wretches consumed in their own lusts. And why not I? No thanks to me! I should have gone to the same lengths but for preventing and sovereign mercy. I see poor wretches in disgrace every time I pick up a newspaper. Why am I preserved from disgrace? Do not forget those two words so marvellously blessed to me MERCIFUL SCREENINGS. Aye, merciful indeed, as God hides us from everyone but Himself, and gives us to know that He knows all about us, and thinks none the worse of us, vile as we are. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. 103:13,14)

It is a marvellous blessing to know that covenant mercies are God's exclusive property to bestow upon whom He will. "Unto Thee, O LORD, belongeth mercy." (Ps. 62:12) "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him." (Dan. 9:9) He is "the Father of mercies," and it is His sovereign right to confer them upon, or withhold them from, whom He will. They are covenant mercies, therefore sure to all for whom they were designed. They are betrothing mercies, (Hos. 2:19) therefore sure to all the members of the church, the bride, the Lamb's wife. They are operative mercies, moving God to us, and us to God. They are revealed in the word, but blessedly, believingly, spiritually received and welcomed to the heart by the sweet constraining power of the Spirit of mercy. That is it! The sigh of my heart is, "Have mercy upon me, O God." (Ps. 51:1) The reply of my most merciful God is, "I will be merciful to thy unrighteousness, and thy sins and thy iniquities will I remember no more." (Heb. 8:12)

The sovereignty of God in the dispensing of His mercy is clearly revealed in our text "For He saith to Moses." Has He ever spoken to you by His word and Spirit? "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy So then" in the face of all objectors "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that

showeth mercy." To whom does He show mercy? Listen! "What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." O how ignorant the despisers of God's sovereignty are of what they owe to God's love to His own in election. "And that He might make known the riches of His glory" Of what? "His glory." His glorious riches "on THE VESSELS OF MERCY, which He had afore prepared unto glory "prepared in covenant prepared in all the mediatorial beauty and glory of Jesus Christ" Even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." Of every one of these God says, "I will surely have mercy upon him." (Jer. 31:20)

The Lord thus bless us all for Christ's sake. Amen.

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