

The author inserts personal comments when quoting Scripture which are indicated by square brackets. All biblical references are quoted from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Our theme today is the mercy of God.

In Proverbs 3:3–4 it says,

Let not mercy and truth forsake you. Bind them around
your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart and so
find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and men.

This is an interesting verse that blends truth and mercy. And God says, “Make sure they are always with you and never forsake them.” Truth needs to be spoken and we need to be right; but mercy needs to be combined with truth. They go together. Truth without mercy becomes callused, hard, and cold. It is often legalistic. And mercy without truth becomes sentimental and wishy-washy and does not really take a stand. And mercy alone is not courageous and has no holiness to it. It must be mercy and truth.

In Psalm 103:1–22 it says,

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me,
bless His holy name!
2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His
benefits:
3 Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your
diseases,
4 Who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you
with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your
youth is renewed like the eagle's.
6 The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all who
are oppressed.
7 He made known His ways to Moses, his acts to the
children of Israel.
8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and
abounding in mercy.
9 He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His
anger forever.
10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor
punished us according to our iniquities.
11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is
His mercy toward those who fear Him;
12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has He
removed our transgressions from us.

13 As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him.

14 For He knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

15 As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

16 For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.

17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children,

18 To such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.

19 The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.

20 Bless the LORD, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, Heeding the voice of His word.

21 Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure.

22 Bless the LORD, all His works, in all places of His dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!

Let's pray.

Father, we ask that in these moments together as we look into Your heart and as we try to understand Your character through the revealed Word of God that is before us, I pray, Lord, that Your mercy will strengthen us. And that Your mercy will sustain us, Your mercy will save us, Your mercy will become a great blessing to every one of us. And Lord, our hearts will be lifted in praise to You. Thank You, Lord, for what You are going to do in the lives of every person in this study. We thank You, in Jesus' name. Amen.

The mercy of God involves the following seven things. One, of course, is His person—who He is. This text opens up in Psalm 103 and says, “Bless the Lord. Bless His holy name.” And notice what verse 8 says: “The Lord is merciful.” Now the Lord does show mercy. The Lord has acts of mercy, but the Bible says that the Lord is mercy. The Lord is merciful, so it involves His person, who He is.

Psalm 111:4 says, “He is full of compassion.” It is interesting how often when we relate to God, we are not really sure who He is. We think we know but let me tell you something: God is not part mercy. God *is* mercy. God is everything mercy could ever hope to be. He is that kind of a Lord to us and I sure am glad. I hope you are too. He is full of compassion.

Psalm 115:5 says, “Gracious is the Lord and righteous.” Yes, our God is merciful. It refers to who He is.

Psalm 119:64 says, “The earth, O Lord, is full of Your mercy.”

Psalm 119:156 says, “Great are Your tender mercies, O Lord.”

Psalm 145:8 says, “The Lord is gracious and full of compassion. Great in mercy.”

And also in the New Testament in Ephesians 2:4 it says that He is rich in mercy because of His great love.

I think a lot of people believe that they have blown it so bad in their life that there is no hope for them. I hear that so much. I hear people who say, “Well if he only knew what I am really like and what I have done, there is no way I could possibly be what you are asking me to be.” God never is asking you to be anything apart from who He is. He provides all that you need. He is not trusting you to perform. That should be good news to a lot of people today. That should just take a heavy burden right off of you. The good news of the gospel is who God is. We already know what stinkers we are. Amen? We often like to say if we knew what was in the heart of the person next to us, we would move. We do not want to know about depravity. We want to know about God’s grace and God’s mercy. And mercy is what God is.

When you come to the Lord, you are not coming to somebody who is sitting with a baseball bat ready to club you for every false move. The Bible teaches that His essential nature and character is mercy. Mercy holds back from us what we really deserve. While grace gives us what we do not deserve. How wonderful it is to know that it involves His person. That is what His character is like. There is never a moment when you come to the Lord that He stops being merciful.

Now that is not always true of people. Every now and then you run into somebody who you say has real compassion and care. They are very merciful and what a shock it is when you see that on a certain occasion or two, they are not merciful. Even the best among us who major in compassion, can, at certain moments, not have it. There is a gift, a spiritual gift, the Bible says, of showing mercy. We believe it is compassion on the sick and suffering. And how delightful it is, especially for those who have visited folks who are sick, to come in and know that they are full of compassion. When you are sick and lying on your bed, you do not want somebody coming in and discussing thirty-two reasons why you deserve what you are getting. I mean, at that moment you want somebody who says, “I love you.” And they exercise mercy and care when you want a few strokes. God has the spiritual gift of showing mercy and compassion on the sick and suffering.

One of my favorite stories is of my own mother when she had open heart surgery several years ago. She had four bypasses. I was sitting like a good son (also her pastor, by the way), but I was sitting as a good son in the recovery room waiting for her. And the doctor let me sit in there waiting for her to wake up. And as soon as she finally just started to

wake up, after several hours, I walked over to her and she took one look at me. Before I could even say anything, she said, “Where’s Pastor Lloyd?” She was referring to my good friend Pastor Lloyd Rinks, who works in hospital visitation. And I said, “Mother, this is your son!” She said, “Well, I know, but I need somebody with compassion.”

Dear friends, we know what mercy is and it is such a delight to be around people who are merciful and kind and compassionate. We often need that sympathy and that encouragement; but let me tell you something; even the best of us in that area often do not show care.

There is One who is in heaven, whose throne is there, who rules all the affairs of men and sees everything that we do. He is not sometimes merciful and sometimes judgmental. Our heavenly Father is always merciful. And the Bible even calls His throne, “the throne of grace where we may obtain [what?] mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). Isn’t it wonderful to know that He is the Lord we come to? He is merciful. He knows what we are like and He knows we are not worth much. But He invites us to come to Him and He wants to do these wonderful things for us. How wonderful is the mercy of our Lord!

Number two, it not only involves His person, but it involves His provision. It is mercy that makes all His benefits possible. Psalm 103:2 says, “Bless the Lord and forget not all His benefits.”

And then you may like to just underline in your Bible, if that is your practice, because you can just see the flow here. Look at verse 3, “Who forgives, who heals.” Verse 4, “Who redeems, who crowns.” Verse 5 says, “Who satisfies.” It is just one verb after another telling you about the benefits of our Lord. It is God who is merciful, who provides healing, forgiveness, redemption, crowns us, and satisfies us. God does it all because He is a merciful God.

The third thing that is involved in the mercy of God is His patience. Look please at Psalm 103:8–9 again. It says, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger.” That is the word “patient.”

By the way, in the New Testament, when you read “patient,” sometimes it is translated “longsuffering,” depending upon the English translation. But it means taking a long time to boil. Slow to anger. Aren’t you glad God does not fly off the handle? Have you grown up in a home where maybe one or more of the parents had a temper? And when you did something wrong as a kid, all of a sudden, wham! I mean, it is national wipe out kids week. It is not easy to experience that.

Now there is a time to be angry. There is a righteous anger and we need to be angry at what is wrong. But sometimes that goes over to people. Have you noticed that? And so, sometimes parents can be angry with their kids because they are not living up to their expectations. Hey, that is not the character of God. God is never angry at people. He is longsuffering. He is angry at what they do—there is a difference, folks. We are to be

angry at sin; but we should be loving toward people, no matter how sinful they are. And it is a struggle that we all face. The mercy of God involves patience.

Look at verse 8 again. “Slow to anger and abounding in mercy.” There is more than enough to go around. And there is more than you need. It says in verse 9, in explaining that, “He will not always strive with us.” Now that is a true statement.

Let’s take, for instance, the longsuffering patience of God in the days of Noah. The Bible refers to it in 1 Peter 3:20 and calls it “patience.” In the days of Noah recorded in Genesis 6:3, God speaks to that corrupt, violent society. There were millions on the planet whom He was going to soon destroy with a flood and God said, “My Spirit will not always strive with men. And his days will be 120 years.” God gave them, however, 120 years. That is what I call mercy. You see, His Spirit will not always strive, verse 9 says, so we would understand the patience from God is that He will not always strive with us. He will not continue to give us all these opportunities. Nor will He keep His anger forever, God one day will reveal it. There is going to be a payday some day. There is a judgment to be faced, unless we turn to the mercy of God.

So when you read this, you see God’s patience in it. He is slow to take action. He is abounding in mercy. And I like to say, “He gives you a long rope.” A lot of times we think that we are, you know, not experiencing any judgment from God. We are just “living it up” or whatever. The world says, “It is national party time for us.” And we are just doing everything we possibly can do—what we believe the world and unbelievers do. We live like them and act like them. We are miserable inside but we do not want anybody to know it. A lot of kids do this, and as a result, they are really messing up their lives. And they say, “Well, I didn’t get zapped.” Wait a minute, the reason you did not get zapped even though you deserve it, is because the Lord is merciful. So do not presume upon His mercy. He will not strive with you forever. He will not keep His anger back forever.

But when we understand the mercy of God, what a wonderful thing it is to know that God is patient with us and He is merciful! By the way, our next message is on the patience of God, so I will say no more at this point.

Number four, when you ask what is involved in mercy? It also involves His punishment, believe it or not. I love Psalm 103:10. When God does punish us for our sins, you must understand that it is done in mercy. If God would punish you according to what you really deserve, you would be in big trouble! The Bible says in verse 10, “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.” Aren’t you glad?

God knows exactly everything that you have ever done, said, or thought. Even when you think nobody knows—even when you have lied. You shined in front of somebody and you put on a big act. But let me tell you something, the Bible says in Hebrews 4:13 that all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to deal. By the way, the truth of the Bible is that you do not even know yourself. You may think you are

hiding. What are you hiding from? You do not even know what you are hiding from. You do not even know who you really are.

In Jeremiah 17:9–10 it says,

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; Who can know it? It is I, the Lord, that searches the reins of the heart. (paraphrased)

God knows us in a way that we do not even know ourselves. And all things about us are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to deal.

Now that is an interesting verse in Hebrews 4:13 because the idea of being naked and open is referring to a sacrificial animal. When the priests hold the animal and expose the neck getting ready to slice the neck and kill the animal, all of us are like the animal with an exposed neck, ready to be judged before God. Aren't you glad for the mercy of God? God will not punish us, the Bible says, in direct proportion to what we deserve. It is not according to our sins. It is not according to our iniquities. And God is gracious and He is loving.

Lamentations 3:22 says,

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

Turn to Psalm 106 and look at verse 44. When you examine the mercy of God it involves His person—who He is. It involves His wonderful provision, all of His benefits. It involves His patience; He is slow to anger and abounding in mercy. And it involves His punishment, and the fact is that He does not punish us according to our iniquity.

Psalm 106:44–46 says,

44 Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He
heard their cry;
45 And for their sake He remembered His covenant, and
relented according to the multitude of His mercies.
46 He also made them to be pitied [that's mercy again.]
by all those who carried them away captive.

Now they are reviewing the history of Israel. Israel is carried away captive and they deserve what they got. It was not even as severe as they thought, at least they were alive. Many of them in captivity were crying and weeping and lamenting over what had happened. But in fact, they were at least alive, life continued. But God heard their cry the Bible says, and for their sakes He remembered His covenant. The reason God relented and did not let it go, why He changed and restored them back, is because of His tender mercies.

Now look folks, a lot of times we mess up our lives. You know that and I know that. We get involved in something we should not be doing. And we just keep going on. And it gets worse. It may be difficult to sin the first time, but it gets easier the second time. And it is easier the third time. Before we know it, we are slaves. We are in bondage to some trap, some habit, some desire or some thing. We are in bondage and we need to be set free.

My friends, it is God's mercy that moves in at a time like that. When we deserve to suffer the consequences of our actions, the Lord relents because He is a merciful God and actually will save us and restore us. And I say, "Hallelujah for that!" Aren't you glad of that? That is who God is, but it does involve His punishment. According to the Bible, His mercy in the midst of that punishment is one of the reasons that there is hope even when we are being judged for what we have done. Wow. That is tremendous! That is the mercy of God.

Back to Psalm 103:11–12.

The fifth thing that is involved is His pardon. There are no two verses in the Bible that so clearly demonstrate what God does with our sin than these two verses.

11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is
His mercy toward those who fear Him;
12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has He
removed our transgressions from us.

Boy, I tell you. I read that and I say, "Praise the Lord!" My sins are gone. They are gone. Now there are always folks around who will remind you of them. Have you noticed that? But according to the Bible, my sins are gone.

The other day I was talking to a guy who was experiencing the results of his many years of drug addiction and he is still having a few problems mentally and physically. He was asking me, "You know, if the Lord has saved me, why..." And I stopped him. Why am I experiencing this? The only I thing I could think of was an old story that I heard when I was a boy in Sunday school of how a father took a son out to explain this to him. And he had the boy pound nails into a piece of wood. He pounded all these nails into the wood. And the boy kept asking, "Well why do you want me to do that?" "Just do what I tell you." So he pounded all these nails. Then he said, "Now, pull them all out." "Well, what for? Why should I?" "Just pull them all out." So he pulled all the nails out. He said, "Now what is left?" He said, "The holes."

In this life we are going to experience scars as a result of our decisions to walk away from the Lord. Do you know that? There are some of us who are physically still suffering from the result of decisions that we made maybe as young people. When God says that He has removed it, He has removed it from a positional standpoint, though the scars remain for now. My dear friends, the hope of the gospel is that when Jesus Christ comes

again, we are going to get a brand new body and we are talking total removal. There will be no more evidence whatsoever. The holes will be gone and we will be made brand new outwardly as we are made brand new inwardly when we come to Christ.

The Bible says, “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). I do not know why it is, but it almost seems like a devil’s trap to get us to remove the word “all.” To think somehow when we bring our sin to a merciful God that there is something that remains and therefore I have to atone for it. According to the Bible, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” That is why we like to say to people, “Hey, you can have a clean slate, starting right now.” If you want to talk about forgiveness—what is it rooted in? Is it in the fact that you are such a worthy possession? Are you kidding? Or that you have such great potential for the Lord? This is some of the preaching of the pulpits of America, but that is not rooted in the gospel.

Forgiveness is rooted in the character of God and that is why you are saved. God is merciful to you and no matter how gross you are or how you have messed up or blown your brain and life away, let me tell you something: God’s character is limitless. And no matter how much sin is in your life—“where sin abounds, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). You could be cleaned up in a moment of time. And that is the gospel. And I thank God for His mercy. It involves complete pardon.

Turn to Psalm 86 please and look at verse 5. This is a wonderful theme and you cannot get it into your system enough because a lot of us are really into performance in our kind of culture. And I am afraid it has dominated the Christian community so bad that even the best among us, and I include myself, have a tendency to tip towards performance every now and then. Nobody cleans up his act by performance, either in coming to Christ or living the Christian life, in spite of what we teach about walking with God.

The only method of cleansing that God ever had is through His Son Jesus Christ and the mercy and compassion and grace of our Lord. That is why it is such a frustrating thing. You want people to walk with the Lord—you want them to do right. Parents feel that way toward their kids. We feel it about ourselves and so we try everything under the sun to somehow clean up what we have done. Folks, there is no other method that God has. You say, “Well, doesn’t it say, ‘Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken?’” Exactly right. And it is the Word that reminds us how sin is cared for. It is rooted in the character of God, not in the performance of man. I thank God for His cleansing, don’t you?

In Psalm 86:5 it says,

For You, Lord, are good and ready to forgive, And
abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.

A lot of people think that God is hesitant. “You know, you have to really barn storm. You have to knock down the doors of heaven, as it were, to really get His attention.” No you

do not. You tell me, in the Prodigal Son story, when the Prodigal Son starts coming back home the father has been waiting for him; when he saw his son a long way off, before he ever got to the house to beg his father's forgiveness, what does the Bible say the father did? He *ran* after him. God is ready to forgive.

You take one step toward our wonderful Lord—you just move a little inch in your heart— and our Lord is ready to forgive. Why? It is because He is merciful. He is compassionate. The Bible says in Psalm 86:5 that He is abundant in mercy to all those who call upon Him. Do you know where the problem lies? We do not call upon the Lord. We are using everything else instead. We are talking to our friends and using every kind of method we possibly can to somehow get our act together. And the Bible says, that the Lord is good, ready to forgive and abundant in mercy to everyone who would call on Him. Isn't that sweet? Man, that is good stuff!

Look at Psalm 130:7–8, please. This is the wonderful pardon of God to the nation of Israel. He said,

7 O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is
mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption.
8 And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Once again, it speaks of pardon, cleansing, and being redeemed from all his iniquities. Why? It is because with the Lord there is what? Mercy. His mercy was great.

Turn to Numbers 14. Let me show you a little interesting passage. Numbers is the fourth book of the Bible. Numbers 14:18–19. Now the people really deserved to be wiped out for their rebellion in the wilderness, but look at this:

18 The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy,
forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means
clears the guilty [doesn't sweep it under a rug], visiting the
iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth
generation.

If they continue to disobey Him, you will see His judgment continue, on and on and on. But look at the next verse.

19 Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to
the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this
people, from Egypt even until now.

Because of all that wilderness rebellion, they deserved to be wiped out. And here is a prayer. "God, pardon them according to [what?] the greatness of Your mercy."

When you appeal to God, you appeal to His merciful character when you want to be cleansed and pardoned from your sin. It is God and who He is that can make that happen.

Turn to Psalm 103 again. The mercy of God not only involves His person, who He is; His provision, all His benefits; His patience, that He will not always strive with us; His punishment, He does not punish us according to our sins; His pardon, He removes them as far as the east is from the west; but it also involves His pity. Mercy involves His pity.

Psalm 103:13–14 says,

13 As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those
who fear Him.

14 For He knows our frame; he remembers that we are
dust.

Parents, listen to this. You know and I know that you have to look at your kids and remember they are kids. Amen? The kids are praying that you are listening now. And there is such a tendency among those of us who are parents to want our kids to know what we know and to think the way we think. First of all, as your kids get older, they believe that you do not know anything. And then one day when they become parents, they will discover how remarkably intelligent you must have been because they themselves are facing the same problem with their own kids.

Now you know a lot of things that they do not know. And sometimes you want them to understand that you do understand. Is everybody with me? And you can really drive them crazy, folks, trying to get them to think like you do. And they do not seem to think that way. The only hope we have is to sit back and say, “just wait.” Isn’t it wonderful, those of you who have kids who are married, isn’t it wonderful to listen to them now? You are becoming extremely intelligent now in their minds. And they are looking at you and they almost say, “Man, I can’t believe it. Was I really like that?” And don’t you love to repeat stories about what happened? “I remember when you were a little squirt and here is what you did...” You know, you just lay it out. What are you doing? You are recognizing, whether you know it or not, that kids are kids.

Aren’t you glad that God looks at you that way? He looks at you and says, “Man, you do not know the first thing about anything.” He says, “You are nothing but a clod of dirt.” This is my translation, but that is what it says. Look at it again. It says, “He remembers we are dust.” And He looks at you and He just loves you. Man! You talk about mercy. I want mercy from God. I do not want justice. I want mercy. I know if I got what I deserved I would be in hell. I want Him to be merciful. And the Bible says that when God looks at me, He looks at me like a father would look at his little kid. He just pities us. “I know all about it, David. I know what you are like. I know a lot more than you do.”

During one sermon when I was in the state of Iowa and I was preaching my heart out—it was one of those sermons where the pastor is enamored but the people are not—I had so much stuff in that message, I could not believe it. I was just thrilled to deliver it. A farmer came up to me afterwards and he said, “You ever fed hogs?” I said, “No, I never have.” He said, “Well, I didn’t think you had ‘cause we don’t dump the whole load on them at

once.” Obviously, I had not been merciful on that occasion to the crowd. They could barely turn their Bibles fast enough. Aren’t you glad that God is merciful to you? He does not dump the whole load on you at once. What a wonderful Lord we have.

It involves something else. Go back to Psalm 103 again. It not only involves His pity, it involves His plan. I like that mercy is behind the plan of God.

And in Psalm 103:15–19 it says,

15 *As for* man, his days *are* like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.
16 For the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
And its place remembers it no more.
17 But the mercy of the Lord *is* from everlasting to
everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children's children,
18 To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to do
them.
19 The Lord has established His throne in heaven,
And His kingdom rules over all.

What a reminder of the plan of God. That man is like a flower of the field. He is passing away. His place is remembered no more. What significance is he in the overall plan of God? The answer comes through loud and clear. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. It is there, folks. That plan is eternal.

Psalm 105 says, “The Lord is good. His mercy is everlasting.” Psalm 138:8 says, “Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever.” Yes, it involves His plan. And that plan is eternal. And it never is without mercy in it. That plan is also faithful.

Please look back to Psalm 89:24, in order to connect the previous message on the faithfulness of God. The plan of God is bathed or saturated with mercy and it is faithful. In Psalm 89:24 and 28 the Lord is speaking about King David.

24 But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him,
and in My name his horn shall be exalted.
28 My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant
shall stand firm with him.

There have been, and still are, folks who question what God did for David. I have a long letter from a lady right now who is really ticked off. She has been studying the life of David. She said, “I cannot understand why God blessed that man. Look what he did! And to have eight wives and how he messed the whole thing up, I can’t believe God blessed him. He doesn’t deserve it. And here he is, the man committed adultery and murder,—set

up the murder of a woman’s husband—and he is a man of bloodshed. He can’t even build the temple! He has eight wives and he has all these kids’ problems and they are not walking with the Lord. And God blesses him!”

And there are plenty of people today, after all we have been through in the last decades, who would say, “Why David?” Let me tell you something, according to the Bible it is to exalt the mercy and grace of our Lord. You would not have chosen him, but God did. He said, “David, I took you from the sheepfold to shepherd My people, Israel.” You would not have chosen him after what happened to him. You would have asked for impeachment. The Lord’s mercy and His compassion is fantastic!

God even had these words to say, which have troubled all of us, who have studied his life. “He is a man after My own heart.” David—what was it about him? Did he blow it? Yes. Did he make mistakes? Indeed, but somehow he knew about God. And the Psalms are filled with a man who cries to God for His mercy and His forgiveness. He was a man who has a heart to repent to get right with the Lord. I tell you, when I look at all that, I say, “Hey, maybe there is hope for us, huh?” This is the wonderful mercy of God.

It is a faithful plan. It is also a sovereign plan. Turn to Romans 9. The plan of God, which is saturated with His mercy, is eternal, faithful and sovereign in all that it does and it is all backed up and strengthened by His wonderful mercy and compassion. And Romans 9:14–16 deals with the salvation of people who get chosen and those who do not. It says,

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

15 For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”

16 So then it is not of him who wills, [You say, “Hey, I made that decision,” but God says, that it is not of him who wills] nor of him who runs, [Hey look, I’ve done a lot. I deserve that. No. It is not on willing or running] but of God who shows [what?] mercy.

The sovereignty of God is involved as He decides to show mercy to people who do not deserve it. After saying all this and in studying it, I began to ask myself, “Well, how should I respond to this?” And I want to tell you, you ought to respond in three ways.

Number one, you ought to praise the Lord. You ought to just sit there in your heart and flip out and go to glory if you can.

In Psalm 86:12–13, it says,

12 I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
and I will glorify Your name forevermore. [Why?]

13 For great is Your mercy toward me.

You want to know what your response should be to this message? It is to praise God with all of your heart because of how great His mercy is to you and to me.

In Psalm 89:1–2 it says,

1 I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.
2 For I have said, “Mercy shall be built up forever; your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens.”

David is praising the Lord in Psalm 136, and there are many praises throughout the Psalms. He says, “O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever.” And he repeats it after every line. “His mercy endures forever. His mercy endures forever.” All the way through the psalm it says, “Praise the Lord.”

Number two, if you want to know what your response should be to what you learned about the mercy of God; it is not only to praise the Lord, but it is to pray for the Lord’s help. Turn to Psalm 69:13–16, please. Do you believe God will help you?

13 But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, hear me in the truth of Your salvation.
14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters.
15 Let not the floodwater overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut its mouth on me.
16 Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.

Does it motivate you to pray?

In Psalm 86:1–3, I read,

1 Bow down Your ear, O LORD, hear me; for I am poor and needy.
2 Preserve my life, for I am holy; you are my God; save Your servant who trusts in You!
3 Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I cry to You all day long.

In Psalm 90:14 the psalmist says,

O satisfy us early with Your mercy that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Psalm 94:17–19 says,

17 Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul would soon have settled in silence.

18 If I say, “My foot slips,” Your mercy, O Lord, will hold me up.

19 In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.

Are you troubled? Understand that the Lord is merciful. Come to Him for help. It is all the way through the Bible. But turn to Hebrews 2 and look at verse 17, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, it says:

17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, [That means He became flesh and dwelt among us. Why did He do it?] that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

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

He can help you because He is a merciful priest. Look over at Hebrews 4:15.

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

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

What is my response to the mercy of God? It is not only to praise the Lord, it is to pray for the Lord’s help.

One last thing. What should my response be to the mercy of God? Turn to Romans 12. It is not only to praise the Lord and to pray for the Lord’s help, but according to the Bible, the proper response to God’s mercies is to present our bodies, our whole life to God. You can trust Him, people, because of His mercy. You do not need to worry anymore because of His mercy. A lot of us have never done this. Romans 12:1–2 says,

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the [what?] mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

[That's the reasonable thing to do in the light of it.]—
2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

A lot of us go that way and get badly messed up. We become so miserable. In the light of the mercies of God, what am I to do? Present my body to God. Cut the strings, people. Whatever it is that is tying you down, whatever the world is offering you, whatever dominion it has over you to be cool or accepted or wanted or whatever—cut the strings. And give yourself totally to a God who loves you more than you could ever dream, who is merciful even though He knows what you are like. He wants to bless you more than you want to receive it from Him. Cut the strings. Stop being conformed to the world and understand that God could change you from the inside out. Call upon Him. Come to the throne of grace and find mercy to help you in your time of need.

Let's close with prayer.

Father, You know how many of us need right now to run in our hearts to You. A lot of us are staying away from You, ignoring You, neglecting You, when You are the only One who can really minister to us. Father, I pray for those in our audience who are not sure if they died now, whether they would be in heaven. We pray, Lord, that You would open their hearts to Jesus Christ and they would know that He is a merciful high priest. One who cares about them like no one else does. Thank You that You do not punish us according to our iniquities. Thank You that You remove our sins as far as the east is from the west. Thank You that You pity us like a father does his child. O God, help us to come to Your heart and to stop running away.

Father, I pray for Christians here who know they have settled their relationship with You by faith in Christ and frankly have been enmeshed and bombarded and controlled by the world, its thinking, its processes, its goals, its dreams, and its ideas. And here You are, merciful God, waiting for us. Patient. Loving. May there be people here who say, "That is it. He loves me more than anybody in this world does. I give my life to Him. Use me whatever way You want." Thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.