

Mercy – Part 3

(Teaching given by Tien Nguyen at Kingdom Living Community, Canberra on 22-1-2017)

Proverbs 3:3, 4 says, “**Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favour and high esteem in the sight of God and man.**”

Just like a coin is not a coin unless it has a head and a tail, mercy needs to go together with truth because they complement each other very well. Here are some of the Bible verses that mention mercy and truth together:

○ **Psalm 25:8-10**

Good and upright *is* the LORD;
Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.
The humble He guides in justice,
And the humble He teaches His way.
All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth,
To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

○ **Psalm 100:5**

For the LORD *is* good;
His mercy is everlasting,
And *His truth* endures to all generations.

○ **Psalm 57:3**

He shall send from heaven and save me;
He reproaches the one who would swallow me up.
God shall send forth His mercy and His truth.

○ **Psalm 61:7**

He shall abide before God forever.
Oh, prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him!

Truth without mercy is hard, severe, harsh, cold, stern, and can be condescending, judgemental, and condemning. Without mercy, truth is subjective because it only meets and satisfies the giver's agenda and needs.

And mercy without truth is only sentimental, weak, wishy washy, and pitiful. Mercy without truth indulges, pampers, and may create co-dependence. Without truth, mercy alone is also subjective because it only meets and satisfies the giver's agenda and needs.

Again, in Proverbs 3:3, we are told to bind mercy and truth around our neck and write them on the tablet of our heart. Why? Because one without the other can spoil or hurt people, and it is not redeeming. To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, believers need to have both. As we obey God's teaching from this verse, we can be sure to find favour and high esteem in the sight of God and man.

How do we ensure that we have the kind of truth that God is talking about, rather than the truth that the world professes to have? God's truth is in His Word. In the book of James, it says that faith without works is dead. Therefore, we must put into practice what we read. To help us to be merciful, God teaches us to do two things: forgive offences and repent of any known sins. By practising these two things, we begin to love as He loves, have a mind like Christ, discern God's truth and judge righteously.

So without sins that can corrupt us, we can become 'love' and make righteous judgements. For God is love and truth.

God first taught me the lesson of **forgiveness**. In this lesson, I had to learn to forgive any offences no matter how insignificant or trivial. Let's read the parable that Jesus told in Matthew 18:21-35:

One day Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents¹. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion (*mercy*), released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii²; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion (*mercy*) on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So my heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

This parable shows how seriously God views forgiveness. So how then can we refuse to forgive others?

The following verses demonstrate God’s great mercy toward all of us:

- Paul, in 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 13 writes: “even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet *I was shown mercy* because I acted ignorantly in unbelief.”
- And in the same chapter, verses 15 & 16, “...that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason *I found mercy*, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”
- In Titus chapter 3, verse 5 we read, “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but *because of his mercy*. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.”
- I Peter 1:3, “All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is *by His great mercy* that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.”
- And I Peter 2:10, “Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now *you have received God's mercy*.”

Mercy is not just about forgiveness and pardoning, but it also includes kindness, goodness, warmth, compassion, patience and being helpful. It is also about being impartial, as the following verse highlights:

“But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favouritism and is always sincere”³.

Matthew 5:7 says that **“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”** But there will be no mercy given to those who are not merciful. As written in James 2:13, **“Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful.”**

Another lesson that the Lord taught me, which to me is as important as the lesson of forgiveness, is the lesson of practising true godly sorrow for any sin in my life. In other words, I’m to repent of any known sins. God’s word says that **godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.**⁴

1 – Equivalent to millions of dollars today

2 – Equivalent to a few thousand dollars today

3 – James 3:17

4 – 2 Corinthians 7:10

Godly sorrow is required if true repentance is to take place. Why repentance? Because repentance helps me to become aware of the real me with faults and weaknesses, and my need to walk closely with God.

While we walk this Earth, repentance will be an on-going process because when we set our minds on the things of the flesh, all kind of evil things can come out of us such as pride, idolatry, lust, envy, jealousy, anger, foolishness, dissensions, etc.

Isaiah 59: 2 says: **“Our iniquities have separated us from our God and our sins have hidden His face from us, so that He will not hear.”** We cannot let our thoughts be directed by our carnal mind.

Romans 8:7 says: **“The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”**

We are continually thankful because of what Jesus has done for us.

1 John 1: 8-10 says: **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar, and His word is not in us.”**

Repentance is a godly sorrow from our heart, knowing that we have offended God. If we make repentance an attitude of the heart, desiring to live a pure life for God, we will know his thoughts and we will also begin to think like him. Putting it another way, we must recognise the importance of repentance so that our minds can be aligned with his mind.

Here is a formula:

Forgive offenses + Repent of any known sins = to live righteously so we can discern **truth** and **judge** righteously.

We find mercy and truth together in Christ. Mercy and truth is him. Mercy and truth form the gospel.

Our God is a redeeming God. Whenever we apply mercy, we must also apply truth, and vice versa, because mercy and truth need to go together. The gospel is redeeming, therefore, mercy and truth given in God’s love will bring redemption. If we don’t have a redeeming answer to the problems of this world, we don’t have the answer.

(to be continued)

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