

I have been a school teacher all my life. My first teaching job was as a graduate assistant in college, teaching a beginning algebra class. That was in the fall of 1957. I cannot remember the faces or the names of any of the twenty-some freshmen and sophomores in my class. But I remember one student, not his face or his name, but his attitude. He didn't like me, my methods, my grading, or my teaching goals and made his displeasure generally known. He transferred to another section a few weeks before the end of the semester, to both of our reliefs. I signed his transfer slip with great pleasure. But I learned from the experience and, I hope he did, too. I especially learned what it meant to be on the other end of the teaching relationship, and gained new sympathy for the teachers in my past and repented some of my own behavior. I hope he learned something, too. I had not learned yet to pray for my enemies in those days. I was young, I knew my subject very well, I thought, and concluded that he was an idiot without hope of remedy.

So I still had very much to learn, mostly that I needed to learn a great deal, mostly that the art of teaching was far more than the transfer of information from one head to another. I knew nothing about what later would become the information age and how easy it would be to transfer much information from one intelligent drive to another. The other day I downloaded from Amazon all forty-some volumes of Calvin's commentaries to my Kindle in just a minute or two. Amazing. I have them in books and they occupy almost two yards of book shelf in my office. How easy it would be if we could do that with algebra, transferring a year of information and skill into the skulls of difficult students. It is hard for me to think that that was almost fifty five years ago. I have used up a great many red pencils and red pens in those years, but I still thoroughly enjoy teaching and hope I can continue to do it until the Lord takes me home to heaven.

The Bible says a great deal about information and getting the information right. In the Old Testament a great deal of information was given in the form of commandments, precepts, laws, regulations. These were all good and profitable, but Israel did not learn them, for their hearts were far from God and they despised the instruction. They did not teach them to their children; they did not write them upon the doorposts of their houses, they turned away from God's good laws and trusted their own minds and opinions and served other gods. In the fullness of time, God sent His only begotten Son and said "Hear Ye Him!" God had written His laws and precepts upon the heart of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and promised that He would write them on our hearts if we would believe and love the Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ is therefore made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification and redemption, according to the Apostle Paul [1 Cor. 1:30]. Jesus Himself said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Matthew 11:29,

So the instruction concerning the gaining of wisdom and instruction that we read in Proverbs 3 applies to us equally as it did to the Jew, although the focus is different in some ways. We see more clearly the face of Jesus Christ; under Moses there was a veil upon the hearts of Israel, a veil that was not removed until Jesus was crucified, risen from the dead, and the Holy Spirit poured out. But the Lord still chastens us in order for us to learn righteousness, and the writer of Hebrews says concerning Christians: [Chapter 12]:

- 1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
- 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.
- 4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.
- 5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:
- 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.
- 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

My text is verses 1-12, the latter portion of what we read a moment ago. There are two things I want to say about this passage; two emphases that I did not make last week, and they are important ones. 1, the meaning of “mercy and truth” in verse 3; 2, the meaning of “neither be weary of His correction.” A correct understanding of these words is important to understanding the passage in a New Testament sense, under the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord.

I. The meaning of “mercy and truth.”

A. We have two choices in the translation:

1. We can treat them as Christian virtues, as is done by many of the modern translations: for instance, the NIV uses “Love and faithfulness.” This is acceptable from the meaning of the words, but takes the edge off a bit, I think.
2. The NKJ retains the translation of the KJ and the Geneva of 1589 and the Tyndale version: “Mercy and Truth,” pointing more to the attributes of God, which are the pattern for all Christian virtues.

B. The two choices point to an important distinction between brotherly kindness and the godliness. According to Peter, godliness is the foundation for brotherly kindness and Christian virtue flows out of the attributes of God.

C. There is a paradox here, for mercy and truth so often appear together in Scripture, and yet are so difficult to reconcile in our minds. For instance, we could look at several passages—not exhausting the subject:

1. Psalm 25:4-22
 - a. Vs. 4: Show me thy paths
 - b. Vs. 5, 6 truth and mercy
 - c. Vs. 7 Don’t remember my sins. But what of truth?
 - d. Vs. 10 All his paths are mercy and truth.
 - e. Vs. 12. The man who fears the Lord will be educated the way the Lord chooses. He learns God’s secret in the covenant, the covenant of made with Jesus Christ by faith.

- f. Vs. 16 and vs. 21. How can mercy and integrity be reconciled?
2. Psalm 57:
 - a. Vs. 1. Be merciful
 - b. Vs. 3. Mercy and truth are from heaven; from God. They are His attributes. But how reconciled?
 - c. Vs. 10, 11. Same thing.
3. Psalm 89
 - a. Vs. 14,15 There is great rejoicing when mercy and truth go forth. But how?
4. Psalm 100: 5. Mercy and truth endure; Hence, they are attributes of God. But is their contradiction in God. How can He be truthful and declare sinners to be righteous.
5. Psalm 85:
 - a. Vs. 2, 3. God has forgiven the people their sins. This means to take away his wrath.
 - b. Vs. 7 show us thy mercy.
 - c. Vs. 10, 11. Mercy and truth will meet together; they will kiss each other: righteousness [truth] and peace [mercy.] This is what salvation is: righteousness and peace kissing each other; mercy and truth meeting together.
- D. This happens only in the Gospel, in the cross of Christ. See Romans 3:19-31
 1. The law establishes truth, that the whole world be guilty before God. Vs. 19
 2. But Christ establishes truth, without the law, through propitiation through the blood of Christ. 21-25
 3. The blood of Christ reconciles justice and mercy; righteousness and peace; God's mercy and truth.
 4. Both the love of God and the righteousness of God are established by the Gospel of Christ.
 5. God cannot justify the sinner if it means speaking an untruth. He cannot damn his people without denying His promise in the Garden of Eden. How is this to be reconciled?
 6. Romans 4:7, 8, 24,25.
- II. Be not weary of His correction. You and I must learn of Christ, to reconcile mercy and truth in our own lives.
 - A. This is not a natural thing. We err on one side or the other, unless we carry the cross, denying ourselves.
 - B. Two things we must always maintain:
 1. There is no mercy from God outside of Jesus and the Gospel. God will not overlook sin; every bit of which must be satisfied in Christ or in the sinner Himself. He said that he will not wink at sin and pretend that it did not occur.
 2. There is no truth apart from that which is revealed in the Cross of Christ. If I am not dead to sin because of the death of Christ, then sin must be finished in me and bring me to eternal wrath. See Romans 5:1-10
 - a. Vs. 1,2 truth is satisfied though Jesus Christ by whom we have faith and hope.
 - b. Vs. 3-5 We endure correction and trials because Christ by His Spirit works love in us.

- c. Vs. 6-9 God's love and justice are wrapped up in Jesus Christ. He endured our wrath so that God can show His love to us. This all comes to us through the sacrifice of Christ.
- d. Vs. 18, 19. His righteousness is imputed to us. So when God declares us righteous, He is not lying about it. Amen and Amen.

Application:

1. Learn to avoid the twin errors:
 - a. Mercy without truth. This is antinomianism and sentimentalism and extremely destructive that does not require submission to the Gospel of the Cross of Christ; it is a lawless and formless love that does great harm. The little boy who has been wronged hears the forced apology from his schoolmate, and knows that it is insincere. His sense of justice is wronged. We must remember that the goodness of God leads us to repentance.
 - b. Truth without Mercy. This can be legalism and false judging. These are those who strain at gnats and swallow camels, and do not understand that God will have mercy and not sacrifice, for Jesus came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
 - c. If you think this is easy, then why are we called to seek wisdom, the wisdom that is from above? Mercy and truth are reconciled only in God.
2. Stand fast in the Gospel, in the faith that justifies, for it is only here that mercy and truth meet together; only here where righteousness and peace kiss each other.
3. Do not despise correction, for the Lord is working to bring forth the virtues of truth and mercy in you, paradoxical though they seem, yet the image of God is renewed in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Amen and Amen