

Doctrine of God Part 18- The Mercy of God

“The sun is not so full of light as God is full of mercy.”

Thomas Watson

Louis Berkhof on the Mercy of God

The mercy of God...An important aspect of the goodness and love of God is His mercy or tender compassion. The Hebrew word most generally used for this is ***chesed***. There is another word, however, which expresses a deep and tender compassion, namely, the word ***racham***, which is beautifully rendered by “tender mercy” in our English Bible.

The Septuagint and the New Testament employ the Greek word ***eleos*** to designate the mercy of God. **If the grace of God contemplates man as guilty before God, and therefore in need of forgiveness, the mercy of God contemplates him as one who is bearing the consequences of sin, who is in a pitiable condition, and who therefore needs divine help.**

It may be defined as *the goodness or love of God shown to those who are in misery or distress, irrespective of their deserts.* In His mercy God reveals Himself as a compassionate God, who pities those who are in misery and is ever ready to relieve their distress.

This mercy is **bountiful**, Deut. 5:10; Ps. 57:10; 86:5, and the poets of Israel delighted to sing of it as **enduring forever**, I Chron. 16:34; II Chron. 7:6; Ps. 136; Ezra 3:11.

In the New Testament it is often mentioned alongside of the grace of God, especially in salutations, I Tim. 1:2; II Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:4. We are told repeatedly that it is shown to them that fear God, Ex. 20:2; Deut. 7:9; Ps. 86:5; Luke 1:50. This does not mean, however, that it is limited to them, though they enjoy it in a special measure.

God’s tender mercies are over all His works, Ps. 145:9, **and even those who do not fear Him share in them**, Ezek. 18:23,32; 33:11; Luke 6:35,36. **The mercy of God may not be represented as opposed to His justice. It is exercised only in harmony with the strictest justice of God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ.** Other terms used for it in the Bible are “pity,” “compassion,” and “lovingkindness.”

1. OT Chesed ...translated (KJV) mercy (149), kindness (40), lovingkindness (30), goodness (12), kindly (5), merciful (4), favour (3), good (1), goodness (1), pity (1)...239 verses in OT (127 in the Psalms)

Goodness, kindness, faithfulness

Psalm 89:1,2

I will sing of the **lovingkindness** (chesed) of the Lord forever;
To all generations I will make known Your faithfulness (emunah) with my mouth.

² For I have said, “**Lovingkindness** (chesed) will be built up forever;
In the heavens You will establish Your faithfulness (emunah).”

Lamentations 3:22,23

²¹ This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.

²² The Lord’s **lovingkindnesses** (chesed) indeed never cease,
For His **compassions** (rachamim) never fail.

²³ They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness (emunah).

Psalm 136

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,
For His **lovingkindness** (chesed) is everlasting.

² Give thanks to the God of gods,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

³ Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

⁴ To Him who alone does great wonders,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;

¹⁰ To Him who smote the Egyptians in their firstborn,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,

¹¹ And brought Israel out from their midst,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,

¹² With a strong hand and an outstretched arm,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

¹³ To Him who divided the Red Sea asunder,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,

¹⁴ And made Israel pass through the midst of it,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;

²³ Who remembered us in our low estate,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,

²⁴ And has rescued us from our adversaries,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;

²⁵ Who gives food to all flesh,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

²⁶ Give thanks to the God of heaven,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

2, OT Racham...translated (KJV) compassion (30), compassions (1), deeply (2), mercies (4), mercy (2)

Compassion...usually of God (eg. Isa. 63:7,15; Psalm 77:9; Psalm 79:8; Psalm 103:4; Psalm 119:77; Zechariah 1:6; Daniel 9:9; Nehemiah 9:28

Psalm 103:4,8,13

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 none of His benefits;

³ Who pardons all your iniquities,

Who heals all your diseases;

⁴ Who redeems your life from the pit,

Who crowns you with **lovingkindness** (chesed) and **compassion** (rachamim);

⁵ Who satisfies your years with good things,

So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.

⁸ The Lord is **compassionate** (rachum) and gracious,

Slow to anger and abounding in **lovingkindness** (chesed).

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 rewarded us according to our iniquities.

¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,

So great is His **lovingkindness** (chesed) 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 Just as a father has **compassion** (racham) on *his* children,

So the Lord has **compassion** (racham) on those who fear Him.

¹⁴ For He Himself knows our frame;

He is mindful that we are *but* dust.

Isaiah 63:7,15

⁷ I shall make mention of the **lovingkindnesses** (chesed) of the Lord, the praises of the Lord,

According to all that the Lord has granted us,

And the great goodness toward the house of Israel,

Which He has granted them according to His **compassion** (rachamim)

And according to the abundance of His **lovingkindnesses** (chesed)....

¹⁵ Look down from heaven and see from Your holy and glorious habitation;

Where are Your zeal and Your mighty deeds?

The stirrings of Your heart and Your **compassion** (rachamim) are restrained toward me.

1. NT Eleos 29 verses in NT

Matthew 9:27;

²⁷ As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, “Have **mercy** on us, Son of David!”

15:22;

²² And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and *began* to cry out, saying, “Have **mercy** on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.”

17:15;

¹⁴ When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, ¹⁵ “Lord, have **mercy** on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶ I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him.”

18:33;

³³ Should you not also have had **mercy** on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had **mercy** on you?’

20:30,31

³⁰ And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, “Lord, have **mercy** on us, Son of David!” ³¹ The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, “Lord, Son of David, have **mercy** on us!” ³² And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” ³³ They *said to Him, “Lord, *we want* our eyes to be opened.” ³⁴ Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

Mark 10:48

⁴⁶ Then they *came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar *named* Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have **mercy** on me!” ⁴⁸ Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, “Son of David, have **mercy** on me!”

Luke 16:24;

²² Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and *saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴ And he cried out and

said, 'Father Abraham, have **mercy** on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

17:13;

¹¹ While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee.

¹² As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; ¹³ and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have **mercy** on us!"

18:38,39

³⁵ As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. ³⁶ Now hearing a crowd going by, he *began* to inquire what this was. ³⁷ They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. ³⁸ And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have **mercy** on me!" ³⁹ Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have **mercy** on me!"

WSC Q. 19. What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.

WSC Q. 20. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?

A. God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.

Romans 9:15,16,18

¹⁴ What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I will have **mercy** on whom I have **mercy**, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶ So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has **mercy**. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

Romans 11:30,31,32

³⁰ For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown **mercy** because of their disobedience, ³¹ so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown **mercy**. ³² For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show **mercy** to all.

Philippians 2:27

²⁵ But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; ²⁶ because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷ For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had **mercy** on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

1 Timothy 1:13,16

¹² I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, ¹³ 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; ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*. ¹⁶ 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.

Titus 3:5

⁴ But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His **mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

Hebrews 2:17

¹⁷ Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a **merciful** and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

2. NT Oiktirmos 5 verses in NT

Romans 12:1,2

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the **mercies** of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

2 Corinthians 1:3

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of **mercies** and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. ⁶ But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; ⁷ and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are *sharers* of our comfort.

Colossians 3:12

¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of **compassion**, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Jude 22,23

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. ²² And have **mercy** on some, who are doubting; ²³ save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have **mercy** with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

Richard Sibbes on the Mercy of God

The Lord is merciful (Jonah 4:2). **God's mercy is His kindness to a person in misery** (Matt. 9:27). The apostle Paul wrote, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3). Notice the order. God is first the Father of Jesus Christ, and then our Father if we are in Christ. Christ has everything *first*, and we receive all from Him. He is the first Son, and we are sons. He is the first beloved of God, and we are beloved in Him. He is filled first with all grace, and we are filled from Him (John 1:16).

God must first be the Father of Christ, and then our Father through faith in Christ, so that He may be "the Father of mercies" to us. God's mercy must see God's justice satisfied. One attribute must not devour another in God (Ps. 85:10). God cannot wrong His own justice, but it must be satisfied by Christ (Rom. 3:26). Christ took our nature to die for us (Heb. 2:14,17), so that God could be our Father despite our sins, for He has punished our sins in Christ, our surety (Heb. 7:22). **Thus God, out of His heart of mercy, found a way that He might do good to us and bring together His mercy and justice. God is holiness; we are a mass of sin and corruption.**

But Christ died for us, and God is the Father of mercies to all who are in Christ. Since God's justice has been satisfied for sin, the obstacle is removed and the stream of God's mercy runs freely.

God is merciful by nature. The sea is not more naturally wet, the sun does not more naturally shine, fire does not more naturally burn, and gravity does not more naturally pull weights down, than God naturally shows mercy when His justice is satisfied. **God's attributes, such as His wisdom and power, would terrify us apart from His mercy. But if we know Him as the Father of mercies, then all His attributes becomes sweet to us. His wisdom will plan good things for us. His power will free us from our enemies. His justice will vindicate us against those who wrong us.**

God glorifies Himself in showing mercy. God is merciful before we are converted. He delays His wrath and does not punish the sinner immediately. God is merciful in forgiving all sin, punishment, and guilt when we trust in Christ. God is merciful in correcting some of the sins of His children (Heb. 12:6), while passing over many sins, and moderating His correction with gentleness and perfect timing. He is merciful in continuing our daily blessings. If we have comfort, it is mercy. If we have strength, it is mercy. His mercies do not fail but are new every morning (Lam. 3:22–23). **Everything that comes from God to His children is dipped in mercy.**

When God is severe with sinners in His justice, it is their fault. His heart is merciful (Lam. 3:33). He is good in Himself. We provoke Him to be severe in justice. But in His own nature, “he delighteth in mercy” (Mic. 7:18). Therefore He will be merciful to all who repent of their sins and take hold of Christ by a true faith. This is the name by which God wants to be known, “merciful and gracious” (Ex. 34:6). The Psalms tells us the same thing, again and again (Ps. 86:15; 103:8,13; 111:4; 116:5; 145:8–9).

God's promises are promises of mercy. Whenever a sinner repents, regardless of how many or how bad his sins may be, God will forgive them all (1 John 1:7). The Bible says to the guilty soul, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:7). We are vindictive, quick to be offended and seek revenge. Our thoughts of mercy are poor and narrow because we are so unmerciful. But God's thoughts are above our thoughts, and His ways above our ways (Isa. 55:7–8). God's mercy is infinite!

—adapted from Richard Sibbes, *Exposition of 2 Corinthians 1*

Derek Rishmawy on the Mercy of God

A Christian cannot dwell too much on the mercy of God. God is infinite and as such, so is his mercy. We cannot come to an end of it. God is good and his goodness towards sinners in our misery, weakness, and rebellion takes the form of mercy. Mercy that forgives. Mercy that blesses. Mercy that treats us gently...

Mercy that gives new life to sinners who have thrown theirs away, pursuing it in a million different broken cisterns instead of drawing from the freely-proffered fountain of life. The good news of the gospel is that the Triune God has shown us mercy in Christ. It doesn't get more basic than that.

And yet, all too often in the practical Christian life, we don't give it more than a passing thought. This might strike some as strange of me to say. Many of us can think of any number of Christians who regularly appeal to the mercy of God to excuse, or justify their sinful wanderings or lack of seriousness in the Christian life. But you have to see that's not the same thing as "dwelling", or giving serious thought to the mercy of God. That's a juvenile confusion of mercy with careless license. Anyone who has given thought to the mercy of God cannot treat it lightly.

Considering the mercy of God with prayer and in the Spirit leads to repentance and deep, faithful, love. That's precisely why Paul begs the Romans to offer their bodies as living sacrifices as a reasonable act of worship, "in view of God's mercy." After eleven chapters of outlining God's mercy through the God's faithfulness to his creation, his promises to Israel, and the whole world—including sinners under judgment—Paul thinks it's eminently reasonable to call his readers to holy, faithful living, with no thought that this should provoke license or apathy.