

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG98 – Will Mercy Triumph Over Judgment?

I want to talk on this podcast about mercy. The reason this subject came into my heart is because I think we, as believers, see things unfolding around us in the world we live in. There is a lot of talk about the end time, and many people in their ideas about the end time – and maybe rightly so, from Scripture – have a sense that it is a tremendous time of judgment; and there is a looking for judgment to take place during these hours, days, years, whatever, of the time of the end. I know that there are many people who try to read through the Scriptures and figure out exactly what is going to happen, how things will unfold, and what the end times really look like; and that is fine that we do that. I think it is good that we dig into the Scriptures and we believe the Lord to open our minds and our hearts and our spirits to what He is doing. We are supposed to be alert. We are supposed to be watching. We are to be waiting. And as we do, we are drawing on the Lord to know and understand what is taking place.

I do think, however, that there has to be a great deal of carefulness on us as we approach some of these things, and this idea of mercy is one of those concepts. With all that we can imagine the end of days would look like, we must remember that there is this little verse in James the second chapter, at verse 13, which reads, “For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.” When we talk about mercy, we are not talking about a thing; we are talking about God Himself. God is mercy. It is His personality to be merciful, and we must recognize this very aspect of the nature of God. Mercy is the nature of God Himself.

When we think about what it means to be believers in Christ, we have to recall the reality – and we will review some of these Scriptures during this podcast – that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us. God made provision for all of mankind. Sometimes, I think, we lose the perspective, and we think that the blessings are for Christians, and the cross is for Christians, and the mercies of God are for Christians. But we have to remember, as Christians, that He died on that cross before we ever existed – which means God made provision for our salvation, and for our forgiveness, and for our release from judgment, before we were ever born, before we ever acted. But when we did come into this world, most of us, if not all of us – it says “we have all sinned and fallen short of the grace of God” – we needed His forgiveness. And this is mercy. The mercy of God is what has made the provision for us, beyond our understanding, before we wanted it or asked for it, before we even understood probably our own need for it. So from that standpoint, we really have to put all of humanity on the same level ground. We all start from the same place; we all have the same need; and God, in His personality, by His very nature, is merciful, and therefore makes a provision for us, makes the provision for us, that we do not end up in judgment.

So because of this, when we think about the judgments of God and the end time, and all of the events that could potentially take place, we have to remember that mercy has the ability to triumph over judgment. It is kind of like God's trump card that He can change things; whether it is deserved or not deserved, whatever else is being played out in these days, God can come along with His mercy and He can remove judgment from the table. He can remove it out of people's lives. And it is not limited to any one; it is an open door for everyone. That mercy will always be there. Until the return of the Lord and

following the return of the Lord, I think we will see days of tremendous mercy that are given at the judgment seat of the Lord. So I want this idea of mercy to be very real to us, and something that we put into our hearts and put into the mix of thinking through and waiting upon God during these times.

I would start by reading a simple definition of the word mercy. I just grabbed this off of the Internet from dictionary.com. It defines mercy as, "compassionate or kindly forbearance shown toward an offender, an enemy, or other person in one's power; compassion, pity, or benevolence." So the idea is that the person receiving the mercy is under the power of the individual who is giving the mercy. Certainly, that is humanity; we are under God's power. He is our Creator – and we must remember that about mercy. God created all of us. He is the Creator of all mankind. And therefore, if we offend Him, if we are His enemy, He has the ability, because of the fact that we are under His power, to extend mercy, compassion, pity, and benevolence to us.

The second definition that is given is, "the disposition to be compassionate or forbearing." The third is, "the discretionary power of a judge to pardon someone or to mitigate punishment." Aren't these interesting definitions? "The power of a judge to mitigate punishment, especially to send to prison rather than invoke the death penalty." We know that we as sinners are all worthy of the death penalty; but the judge has the discretionary power to pardon us and to mitigate the punishment that is due – and that is exactly what Christ did on the cross. He removed the punishment that is due us, the punishment of death. Another definition that is given is, "an act of kindness, compassion, or favor." And lastly, "something that gives evidence of divine favor," such as a "blessing."

These definitions give us the idea of what we talk about when we are talking about mercy, and when we think about this thing of mercy. I especially want us to remember this singular verse in the book of James, "For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment." That statement just comes out of the blue, there is no qualifier to it. Mercy triumphs over judgment. God as the Judge has the right and the ability, being our Creator, to extend mercy to anyone. And this is part of my concern with this, because I think people sometimes are so bent on seeing judgment, and seeing people pay the price of judgment for what they have done. And I don't care what wickedness there is in the world, and what things that we have seen go on – we must remember that God is the Creator of us all, and He is the Judge. It is His option and His ability to extend mercy to anyone, no matter how heinous the crime or the offense is. This is necessary for us to grasp when we are watching end time events unfold.

We have already seen in history things such as the Holocaust that are just beyond belief; and you can barely grasp, on a human level, how there could possibly be forgiveness to those that were involved. But we must remember, this is the very nature of God; and our offenses are as great as any other offenses. God does not measure. His thoughts are not our thoughts, His ways are not our ways. He does not relate to these things as we do on a human level. Therefore we must, I think, as we go through these days, and as we live as those bringing the light of Christ and speaking to the earth about God and who God is, we must remember Him as this merciful Judge; we must remember Him as this merciful Creator; and we must remember that it is always within His ability and option to minister mercy, and to have that mercy triumph over whatever judgment is certainly deserved by many.

Matthew 5:7 says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." This is very helpful to know that if we want to receive mercy, if we do have an understanding of mercy, it would be very wise that we become those who do minister mercy. And so we will go to Matthew the eighteenth chapter. This is a very interesting story; it starts in verse 21 with Peter: "Then Peter came and said to Him," speaking of

Messiah, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?” Now, notice this, not just “how often may my brother sin,” no, “sin against me”; he is taking it very personally: “How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” I am sure Peter thought that was more than enough. Yeshua goes on in verse 22, “Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’” So again, we see here, His thoughts are not our thoughts, His ways are not our ways. But this is definitely a parable and a story being told by Yeshua relating to this very issue about mercy.

In verses 23-27, He goes on, “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ And the Lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.” He had the ability to do that, and he chose to do it. And again, this is Yeshua, this is the Messiah, telling us about the Kingdom. This story gives us a comparison – “for this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to this king.” So He is telling us, look around you, at the time of the Kingdom coming, and recognize: you may find the King bringing forgiveness on levels and extending mercy to people that in your mind have no right to mercy, and should not receive mercy. And what we need to be careful of is our reaction, and how our spirit responds, when all of a sudden the King begins to extend mercy. One thing that should help is for us to know that He does not gradate sin: one sin is as much of a violation against Him as another. And most of our sin equates to idolatry, and there is nothing worse than that in the eyes of God.

This story goes on in Matthew the eighteenth chapter; because after this slave was forgiven, he goes out and finds a fellow slave who owes him just a little bit of money, and he tells the guy, “Hey, I want my money – now!” The slave did the same thing that he did to the king, he fell on his face and said, “Oh please, have patience with me, I will repay you everything.” And this slave that had just received this tremendous mercy from the king refused to do that. Verses 31-34 say, “So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened,” because he choked this fellow slave and demanded his money back, “they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.”

Now get this verse 35, “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.” This idea of forgiveness, this idea of showing mercy, and this idea of how we react when the Father, the heavenly Father, shows mercy on those who may have offended us, or those who may owe to us some debt – we are going to have to learn to move in mercy. And I believe this podcast is important, because I think we should begin crying out to God now that He work these things in our heart, before we face them on a level that could be detrimental to us. Just like this slave – even though he had received mercy, which all of us have from the Lord, he was refusing to extend mercy. Lord, don't allow us to be like this slave. We don't want to fulfill this parable about Your Kingdom. We want to follow the Father, the Master, the Lord, the King; and when He extends mercy, we want to be enabled by You to extend that same mercy to others.

First Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Let this be burned into our hearts, that we constantly remember that through the cross of Christ we have been granted mercy, and we have been born again to a living hope through His resurrection. That resurrection, and that cross, and that mercy today are still alive and well to every human who walks the face of this earth. Just because we may have opened our hearts sooner, or believed before others, we cannot look at those that we call sinners and say, "Oh, there is no hope for them"; or watch the actions of people and say, "Ah, that is too great of an offense against God for there to be any mercy." No, the cross of Christ is still open and available to everyone who will receive it. It is the mercy of God extended to all creation, to all humanity, and it remains there, available for everyone who will turn and receive it. Remember, while you were yet an enemy, Christ died on that cross. He did not die after you became a believer; He died while you were a sinner and an enemy. Likewise will all of humanity receive the mercy of God. His provision of mercy was created and arranged before we all even knew or understood or cared to receive it.

Luke 6:35-37 goes on to say, "'But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.'" Now He is talking about you, not the sinners out there. That is how we got to where we are: He is kind to ungrateful and evil men. And before we were able by grace to open our hearts, we were ungrateful and evil men. "'Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.'" These are the ways of the Spirit. These are the ways of the body of Christ. These are the actions that we who have received mercy are to live and act in this world. That is what makes us the light on the hill that people see and look to.

Titus 3, starting at verses 3-7, says, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior" – God is our Savior, because He is mercy. When "God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared" – it is not a love for me; it is not just a love for you; it is not a love for Christianity; and it is not just a love for the Jewish people – it is a love for mankind. When "God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 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, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Isn't that a beautiful picture of how we got to where we are as believers? He did it all for us in His mercy.

Ephesians 2 is another great Scripture relating to this. Starting at verses 1-10, it says, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air" – we were under satan, we were directed and led about by his whims – "according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." Yes, there are many sons of disobedience out there in this world. And when we look upon it, it is tragic and it is horrible, and their actions seem unforgivable; but we must remember, "you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in" those people. "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been

saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

It is amazing what He has done for us; and all of these things are speaking about the Gentile believers. Peter addresses it in First Peter 2, verse 10, and says, “For you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” So we see this great outpouring of mercy upon the Gentile world, and that door is still open of mercy for them to receive it. But I want to go on to some of the Scriptures that then talk about Israel and the Jewish people, because this is so tied in to how God has extended mercy. I want us again to remember this, because in the end times, in these days, as God is dispensing so much, we will see mercy. And one of the greatest expressions of mercy will be to all of the Jewish people that He has called and made covenant with; because they have gone through what they have gone through, and God has used that, what He has done with Israel in disciplining them, and He has used what they went through as an expression of their disobedience, in order that God would open the door and show mercy to all of the disobedience of humanity. That is really what the story is about of the chosen people.

In Romans 11:28-31, Paul says, “From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake,” speaking of the Jewish people; they are enemies for your sake. For your sake? What does he mean, for your sake? Well, because through the discipline that they are receiving from their disobedience, then the door of mercy was open to the Gentile world. Let’s go on: “But from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” – the calling on Israel is irrevocable. “For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience” – see, the disobedience of Israel and what they have gone through, as I said, opened the door for God to bring mercy and extend mercy to all of the Gentile creation, which is the rest of the world. And so we have this great gift, that now we have been shown mercy because of their disobedience. “So these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.” Because of their disobedience and God disciplining them, He opened the door of mercy to the Gentile world; and once He opened the door of mercy to the Gentile world, and we received that mercy from our disobedience, then it turned around and opened the door again for Him to show mercy through His covenants to the Jewish people. God is so amazing! He is such a great, loving Father, and the way He works is just beyond our ability to comprehend it.

Verses 32-33, “For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.” Jews and Gentiles alike are shown mercy, because we all were found to be disobedient; and now He is extending mercy to all. “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!” Romans 9:13-15 says, “Just as it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’ What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’” Brace yourself – God will have compassion and show mercy to whoever He wants to. And as we go through the rest of these verses, down through verse 22, many times they are difficult for people to understand; but let me simplify something very clearly. These Scriptures are saying, God is our Creator, and we as man have no right or ability to challenge Him and what He does, or how He does it. It is His choice. And it uses the example of the potter and the clay, verses 21-24: “Or does not the

potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.”

So we see that this mercy is getting ready to be extended, because God is coming to the end of this plan. And for His very name’s sake, He is going to redeem His people, His chosen covenant people Israel, and He has already extended and opened the door through the cross to all of the Gentile world, that we may be a part and partakers of His mercy.

I want to go to Ezekiel, chapter 39 and verses 25-29. “Therefore thus says the Lord God, ‘Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name.’” See, He does all these things for His name’s sake. Why? Because none of us are worthy. We are all shut up in disobedience. We have all been disobedient. So ultimately, God fulfills His mercy and brings His mercy for His name’s sake, because it shows who He is through all eternity. All creation will know who God is, that He is the merciful, loving Creator, because all of this is done for His name’s sake. “‘They will forget their disgrace,’” again, talking about Israel, “‘and all their treachery which they perpetrated against Me, when they live securely on their land with no one to make them afraid. When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,’ declares the Lord God.”

So what is He doing with the Jewish people? He is magnifying who He is and He is explaining what He is to the nations, to all the nations of the world, that they may see through the grace and mercy extended to Israel that everyone has the ability to enter in and receive the grace which He is providing.

Habakkuk had a prayer, and he said in chapter 3, verse 2, “Lord, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known;” in other words, do it again right now, Lord. “In wrath remember mercy.” That is what God does; in wrath, He remembers mercy, and He is going to do that.

The last Scripture I want to read is out of Jude 21-24: “Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are waiting on the Lord. We are waiting for the Lord. But this gives us something very specific: “Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are not waiting, in these end days, to behold judgments poured out upon the earth; we are waiting to behold the mercies of God through our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life being poured out upon this age. Verse 22, “And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.” This is such a burden of my heart, that we, as the body of Christ, begin to come into an understanding and really be waiting to see God extend mercy, be praying for mercy to triumph over judgment. What good does it do to see people lost in judgment?

I want to just end with a few points here. Number one, God is mercy. Mercy is not a thing, it is Him. He is mercy. So do not be surprised when He shows up, and you find mercy being extended. Also, in Second Peter 3:9 is my second point: “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is

patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” We must remember that. If these are the end days, this is something that should be a clarion call for us – He is not wishing for anyone to perish in judgments. He is looking for all to come to repentance. And we believe for that, and we cry out that mercy would triumph over judgment. Amen.