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What Does the Bible Say About Mercy? — The Foundation · KJV Scriptures with Strong's Numbers

THE FOUNDATION · THE ORIGINAL STUDY, SET IN THE HOUSE ORDER

Mercy — Foundational Biblical Doctrine

OPENING WORD

Mercy is not only a feeling; it is an action. In the old language it is two words. The first is chesed (H2617, mercy): the mercy that flows from a covenant — a kindness bound by a promise, that keeps faith. The second is racham (H7356, tender mercies): the deep love that flows down from the greater to the lesser, as a father to a child. All mercy flows from God. He showed us mercy first, and he asks that we show it to one another; and when we do, the glory belongs to him and to Christ, not to us. His mercy is a saving mercy. It brought Lot out of the fire. It kept Jacob, who was not worthy of the least of it. And it sounds through the whole psalm: his mercy endures for ever. The aim of all his mercy is one thing — to save: not by works which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. Search it out.

THREE QUESTIONS THIS STUDY ANSWERS:

1. What are the two words for mercy in the old language, and how is mercy an action and not only a feeling?
2. What mercy does God require of us, and where does that mercy come from?
3. What is the aim of God's mercy, and how does it endure for ever?

GREEK KEYWORDS

“mercy” — **G1656 eleos** — mercy, compassion; the kindness owed in a relationship
the age of salvation is the age of mercy — God's saving act in Christ

“have mercy” — **G1653 eleeo** — to show mercy, to have compassion, to pity
the cry by the road — have mercy on me — and mercy shown to another (the good Samaritan)

“merciful” — **G1655 eleemon** — merciful, full of pity
blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy; a merciful high priest

“alms” — **G1654 eleemosyne** — mercy shown in a deed, a gift to the needy

mercy that works with the hand — alms, the good works of Dorcas

HEBREW KEYWORDS

“mercy” — **H2617 chesed** — covenant lovingkindness; a sure, steadfast mercy
the mercy that flows from covenant — an action, with trust and truth, kept for ever

“tender mercies” — **H7356 racham** — compassions; the same word is elsewhere the WOMB
the deep love that flows down from the greater to the lesser — mother-deep, and it never fails

OPENING ANCHOR

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy [**G1656 eleos**] he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

NOT BY WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH WE HAVE DONE → ACCORDING TO HIS MERCY HE SAVED US.

(My personal thoughts — here is the aim of the whole study: mercy saves. It is not paid to a man for his works; it is shown to him because God is merciful. And the mercy is not only a word — it saves through the washing of new birth, the water and the Spirit.)

I. MERCY IS AN ACT — WHAT GOD REQUIRES OF US

A. Matthew 9:13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy [**G1656 eleos**], and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

I WILL HAVE MERCY, AND NOT SACRIFICE → I AM COME TO CALL SINNERS TO REPENTANCE.

(My personal thoughts — God would rather have mercy shown than a gift laid on the altar: Mercy is not a feeling shut up in the heart; it is a thing done to another.)

B. Luke 10:37 And he said, He that shewed mercy [**G1656 eleos**] on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

HE THAT SHEWED MERCY ON HIM → GO, AND DO THOU LIKEWISE.

(My personal thoughts — of the three who passed by, only one was a neighbor, and it was the one who did mercy. Mercy works itself out through the hand — go, and do the same.)

C. Matthew 18:33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion [**G1653 eleeo**] on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity [**G1653 eleeo**] on thee?

SHOULDEST NOT THOU ALSO HAVE HAD COMPASSION → EVEN AS I HAD PITY ON THEE.

(My personal thoughts — the mercy God asks of me rests on the mercy he showed me first. He forgave me much; so I must forgive. All my mercy is answered mercy.)

D. James 2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy [**G1656 eleos**], that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

NO MERCY SHEWED → JUDGMENT WITHOUT MERCY + MERCY REJOICETH AGAINST JUDGMENT.

E. Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful [**G1655 eleemon**]: for they shall obtain mercy [**G1653 eleeo**].

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL → THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY.

(My personal thoughts — the mercy I show and the mercy I obtain are bound together. Give, and it will be given back: mercy, or else judgment without mercy. And all of it flows first from God — the glory is his and Christ's, not mine.)

II. THE SAVING MERCY OF GOD IN CHRIST

A. Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy [**G1656 eleos**], for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

GOD, WHO IS RICH IN MERCY → HATH QUICKENED US TOGETHER WITH CHRIST → BY GRACE YE ARE SAVED.

B. 1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy [**G1656 eleos**] hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from

the dead,

ACCORDING TO HIS ABUNDANT MERCY → BEGOTTEN US AGAIN UNTO A LIVELY HOPE.

C. Hebrews 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful **[G1655 eleemon]** and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

A MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST → TO MAKE RECONCILIATION FOR THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE.

(My personal thoughts — before Christ came there was mercy, but it was not yet full. True mercy is shown at last in him: a merciful high priest, who brings the sins of the people to be at one with God. The age of salvation is the age of mercy.)

III. THE CRY FOR MERCY

A. Mark 10:47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy **[G1653 eleeo]** on me. (48) And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy **[G1653 eleeo]** on me.

JESUS, THOU SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME → HE CRIED THE MORE A GREAT DEAL.

(My personal thoughts — mercy may be cried for by name. The more they told him to be quiet, the more he cried out; and the mercy did not stop for him. Mercy is expected and hoped for; not claimed as something owed — yet it answers those who cry.)

IV. MERCY THAT WORKS WITH THE HAND — ALMS THROUGH THE CHURCH

A. Luke 11:41 But rather give alms **[G1654 eleemosyne]** of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

GIVE ALMS OF SUCH THINGS AS YE HAVE → ALL THINGS ARE CLEAN UNTO YOU.

B. Acts 9:36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds **[G1654 eleemosyne]** which she did.

FULL OF GOOD WORKS AND ALMSDEEDS WHICH SHE DID.

(My personal thoughts — in the New Testament the gifts flow first to the church, and from the church to the brothers and sisters, and then to those outside. So the need is met in order, and the giving is not turned to vanity or to the will of one man.)

V. THE MERCY THAT FLOWS FROM COVENANT — LOT, AND JACOB

A. Genesis 19:19 Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy **[H2617 chesed]**, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:

THOU HAST MAGNIFIED THY MERCY → SHEWED UNTO ME IN SAVING MY LIFE.

(My personal thoughts — the mercy of God will take a man as far as he is willing to go, and will stay with him until he is fully persuaded of God's loving care. Lot would not go up to the mountain; the natural man cannot live without a city.)

B. Genesis 19:29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

GOD REMEMBERED ABRAHAM → AND SENT LOT OUT OF THE MIDST OF THE OVERTHROW.

(My personal thoughts — notice why Lot was spared: God remembered Abraham. The mercy that saved Lot flowed down the covenant God made with another. Covenant mercy reaches further than the man who receives it.)

C. Genesis 32:10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies **[H2617 chesed]**, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

I AM NOT WORTHY OF THE LEAST OF ALL THE MERCIES, AND OF ALL THE TRUTH.

(My personal thoughts — that a man is not worthy of the least of the mercies is the very thing that brings thanksgiving, for mercy is a gift, not a wage. What is deserved brings no thanks; what is given freely brings praise.)

D. Genesis 32:12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

I WILL SURELY DO THEE GOOD → MAKE THY SEED AS THE SAND OF THE SEA.

(My personal thoughts — the aim of mercy is salvation, the completing of God's love. Jacob was delivered, and his descendants would yet be delivered; mercy does good, and does it to the end.)

VI. HIS MERCY ENDURES FOR EVER

A. Psalm 136:1 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy [H2617 chesed] endureth for ever.

O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD, FOR HE IS GOOD → HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER.

B. Psalm 136:4 To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy [H2617 chesed] endureth for ever.

TO HIM WHO ALONE DOETH GREAT WONDERS → HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER.

(My personal thoughts — the one line sounds again and again through the whole psalm: his mercy endures for ever. The wonders, the heavens, the sun and moon, the leading through the wilderness — all of it is set to remind us that his mercy has no end.)

C. Psalm 136:23 Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy [H2617 chesed] endureth for ever: (24) And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever. (25) Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever.

REMEMBERED US IN OUR LOW ESTATE + REDEEMED US FROM OUR ENEMIES + GIVETH FOOD TO ALL FLESH → HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER.

CLOSING

Psalm 136:26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy [H2617 chesed] endureth for ever.

O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE GOD OF HEAVEN → HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER.

Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy [G1656 eleos], for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

GOD, WHO IS RICH IN MERCY → HATH QUICKENED US TOGETHER WITH CHRIST → BY GRACE YE ARE SAVED.

(My personal thoughts — gather the whole study into one line: mercy is an action, and it flows from God. It is two words in the old language — the covenant mercy that keeps faith, and the deep love that flows down to the low. God showed it first, and asks that we show it to one another. It took Lot from the fire and kept Jacob who was not worthy of the least of it, and it sounds through the whole psalm without end. And the aim of all of it is to save: God, who is rich in mercy, has made us alive together with Christ. His mercy endures for ever, and it endures all the way to salvation.)

7 QUESTIONS

1. Titus 3:5 — Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he:

- a) called us to repentance
- b) saved us
- c) begat us again

2. Matthew 9:13 — I will have mercy, and not:

- a) judgment
- b) sacrifice
- c) alms

3. Matthew 5:7 — Blessed are the merciful: for they shall:

- a) obtain mercy
- b) see God
- c) be comforted

4. **Ephesians 2:4 — But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, hath:**
a) saved us by works
b) begotten us again unto a lively hope
c) quickened us together with Christ
5. **Genesis 32:10 — I am not worthy of the least of all the:**
a) mercies, and of all the truth
b) wonders of the LORD
c) blessings of Abraham
6. **Genesis 19:29 — When God destroyed the cities of the plain, God remembered Abraham, and:**
a) sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow
b) spared the city of Zoar
c) had mercy on the plain
7. **Psalms 136:23 — Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy:**
a) is from everlasting
b) is over all his works
c) endureth for ever

ANSWER KEY: 1-b, 2-b, 3-a, 4-c, 5-a, 6-a, 7-c

HOW THIS STUDY BRANCHES

→ **HOW THE WORDS MATTER: THE OLD LANGUAGE HAS TWO MERCY WORDS — CHESED (H2617, MERCY), THE COVENANT KINDNESS, AND RACHAM (H7356, TENDER MERCIES), THE LOVE THAT FLOWS DOWN; THE NEW LANGUAGE HAS THREE — ELEOS (G1656, MERCY), THE MERCY THAT ACTS; ELEE0 (G1653, HAVE MERCY), THE MERCY CRIED FOR AND SHOWN; AND ELEEMOSYNE (G1654, ALMS), THE MERCY THAT GIVES WITH THE HAND.**

→ **HOW THE NEW COVENANT OPENS IT FURTHER: THE MERCY SHOWN TO LOT FOR ABRAHAM'S SAKE (GENESIS 19:29) IS OPENED WIDE IN CHRIST — GOD, RICH IN MERCY, HAS MADE US ALIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM (EPHESIANS 2:4-5). COVENANT MERCY BECAME A SAVING MERCY FOR ALL.**

→ **HOW THIS TOUCHES JEW AND GENTILE: MERCY SWORN TO THE FATHERS, AND MERCY CRIED FOR BY A BLIND BEGGAR BY THE ROAD (MARK 10:47), ARE ONE MERCY. IT FLOWS TO ALL WHO WILL RECEIVE IT.**

→ **HOW THIS APPLIES TO YOU: COME THE WAY OF THE BLIND MAN — CRY OUT AND DO NOT BE SILENCED (MARK 10:48); SHOW MERCY WITH YOUR OWN HAND (LUKE 10:37); AND GIVE THANKS, FOR YOU ARE NOT WORTHY OF THE LEAST OF THE MERCIES (GENESIS 32:10).**

→ **WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ETERNITY: THE AIM OF MERCY IS SALVATION (TITUS 3:5), AND HIS MERCY ENDURES FOR EVER (PSALM 136:26). IT BEGAN THE WORK, AND IT WILL NOT STOP BEFORE IT HAS FINISHED IT.**

→ **RABBIT TRAIL: JOHN'S BAPTISM WAS A FLEEING FROM THE WRATH TO COME TO THE MERCY OF GOD (MATTHEW 3:7; MARK 1:4) — NOT THAT THE WATER SAVED, BUT THAT IT WAS THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE (1 PETER 3:21); THEY KNEW THEY DESERVED JUDGMENT, AND SOUGHT MERCY INSTEAD.**

→ **POSSIBLE REVELATION: MERCY IS EXPECTED AND HOPED FOR, NOT CLAIMED AS A WAGE — WHAT IS EXPECTED STANDS IN THE GIVER'S HAND, BUT A WAGE THE TAKER WOULD CONTROL; SO MERCY IS ALWAYS A GIFT, AND A GIFT BRINGS THANKSGIVING, AND THANKSGIVING GIVES ALL THE GLORY BACK TO GOD. (MY PERSONAL THOUGHTS)**

WHAT MUST YOU DO TO BE SAVED?

Look at our Bible study — "What Must I Do to Be Saved"