

Call to Obedience #119/516
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Mercy Triumphs Over Judgment

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God's mercy is conditional on us being merciful: *For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment* (James 2:13). James says that if we judge others by what they say or do, and we are not merciful toward them, God will likewise judge us without mercy. When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, if we want to have any of God's mercy given to us so that we can make it to heaven, we need to be merciful toward the people we meet during our lifetime. I am convinced that none of us are going to make it to heaven without God being merciful to us. There are many areas in our walk with God where we need to be careful so that we can be candidates to receive God's mercy.

If you have not prayed as you should every day since your conversion experience, you will need God's mercy on judgment day. If you have not loved everybody the same since your conversion, you will need God's mercy on judgment day. If you have not given sacrificially to the work of God since your conversion or if you have been skipping and missing with your giving, you will need God's mercy on judgment day. If you have not obeyed God in everything, you will need God's mercy on judgment day. If you have bought things you should not have bought, if you have said things you should not have said, if you have watched television programs you should not have watched, if you have missed church services when you should have been there; dear ones, you will need God's mercy. I believe all of us will need the mercy of God on judgment day because James also said: *For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all* (James 2:10). God's mercy is abundant and infinite and will only be given to those who have been merciful.

Dear ones, we are experts at judging people. We judge our brothers and sisters at church. We judge our minister on his sermons, on the type of car he drives, on his home life, on his personal habits, on what he does on his day off, on whom he associates with, on where he eats, on how he spends his money, on whom he calls, on whom he does not call very often, on his work habits, etc., etc. We judge policemen, we judge politicians, we judge neighbors and we judge our neighbors' children. Almost everyone sits in judgment of nearly

everybody else at all times, as to whether those things that the other person does are right or wrong, wise or foolish, in good taste or in bad taste. The judging that we do is almost a continuous process: they should have bought that car; she should have married that person; he should have someone else as a contractor; they should have done this with their money rather than that; they should have sung a different special, and so our judging goes on and on.

There is an important and beautiful story regarding this subject matter in chapter 18 of the book of Matthew. Peter asked Jesus the following question: *Then Peter came to Him and said, 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* (Matt. 18:21-22). Jesus told Peter that he needed to forgive his brothers and show them mercy seventy times seven, and that means indefinitely, without end. From this, Jesus wants you to forgive, and forgive, and forgive and forgive seventy times seven which also includes that you have mercy, and have mercy, and have mercy, and have mercy and on and on.

Immediately after telling Peter that he needed to forgive everyone seventy times seven, Jesus told a parable (Matt. 18:23-35). I will tell you that parable in my own words: There was a king who wanted to settle his accounts. As the auditors were going through the books, they discovered that they had a head steward who owed the king two million dollars. The king called for the head steward and said: "Son, it is time for you to pay up those two million dollars that you owe." Well, the head steward did not have the money to pay up, so the king said to him: "You must sell your wife and your children into slavery and then sell all you have: your house, your land and everything else so you can pay your debt." Well, the head steward fell on his knees before the king, and cried out, "Be patient with me and I will pay back everything that I owe." Because of his pleading, the king had mercy on him and simply said: "I forgive you all that you owe me, I cancel all of your debt." Instead of putting him on an easy payoff plan, he just cancelled all the debt. Glory to God! Think of it. The king had cancelled his two million dollar debt. Oh, what mercy! This permitted the head steward to keep his wife, his children and everything else that he had.

The parable then continues: The same head steward then went to one of his servants who owed him two dollars. He grabbed his servant by the neck and started choking him and said: "Pay me back the two dollars that you owe me." His servant did the same thing that the head steward had done earlier before the king; he fell on his knees saying: "Have mercy on me and I will pay

you back.” But the head steward refused to have mercy on him, and immediately had his servant cast into prison. Shortly thereafter, the king learned about his head steward’s behavior and he became very angry. The king had the head steward jailed and told him that he would not get out of jail until he had paid everything back—the two million dollars. Concluding the parable, Jesus said: *So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses* (Matt. 18:35).

Whenever you are unmerciful to your fellow brothers, or to your sisters, or to your pastor or to others, you will not be given mercy on judgment day because the Holy Spirit is grieved. When the head steward refused to show mercy toward his brother after he had obtained mercy and received forgiveness from the king, he was then put in prison which meant he lost his forgiveness, and he also lost his fellowship with the king. Friends, you need to be merciful toward your neighbors, toward your Christian brothers, toward your Christian sisters, toward your pastor or toward unbelievers who do not agree with you; if not, you will then lose the forgiveness and fellowship that you once had with Jesus Christ. James said: *Mercy triumphs over judgment*.

The New Berkley Version in modern English has a very interesting passage in chapter 14 of the book of Romans. This is where the Apostle Paul said the following: *Welcome the weak believer, and do not criticize his views. One person has faith that allows him to eat everything, but a weaker one confines himself to vegetables. The one who eats should not feel contempt for him who abstains, nor should the one who abstains censor him who eats; for God has accepted him. Who are you to censor another’s servant? ...One person gives preference to one day above another day, while another person esteems every day. Each person should be fully convinced in his own mind* (Rom. 14:1-5 NBV). This verse is saying that Christians judged other Christians by what they ate or by what days they worshipped. The Apostle Paul said that one man eats just vegetables and another man also eats meat. One man may worship on Sunday and another may worship on Saturday. And of course, the list continues: some believe in sprinkling and some in immersion, some in speaking in tongues and some are adamantly against it, some believe in making a lot of noise in worship and some believe that worship ought to be a quiet experience, and some wear jewelry and some believe it is a sin to wear jewelry, and on and on. *Mercy triumphs over judgment*. The Apostle Paul said that the man who eats meat should not feel contempt for him who does not eat meat and then it continues by saying that he who abstains from eating meat should not censor him who

eats meat because God has accepted him. Since God, receives the man who is a vegetarian as much as the man who is not, what business do we have judging the one or the other?

Dear ones, you are not called upon by God to sit in judgment of each other. You are called to love one another because *...love is the fulfillment of the law* (Rom. 13:10). Be merciful, even as your Father in heaven has been merciful to you. Remember these words from the Lord's prayer: *But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses* (Matt. 6:15).

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