

## Obtain Mercy

By Nathan Warner

*“And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it and let us celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’”*

(Luke 15:21-24a NASB)

Mercy is God’s gift to repentance. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines **mercy** as “kind or forgiving treatment of someone who could be treated harshly.” All mankind deserves to be treated harshly, for our transgression is great. It is our fleshly nature to transgress, to disobey God. All mankind are prodigal sons who have left their father’s house to live a life of sin. Not everyone realizes, as the Prodigal Son did, that the largest estate in sin is far more wretched than the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, for *“when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my Father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men’”*” (Luke 15:17-19).

There are many responses to God’s offering of mercy. A repentant man sees it as the undeserved gifting of life to his doomed inheritance in death. The unrepentant man scoffs at mercy as an insult to his pride, sovereignty, and self-sufficiency; while the hypocrite, who feigns repentance, sees it as leverage to avoid punishment in order to continue his ways. They seek to take advantage of God’s mercy to continue in their transgression, despite His command to not sin. They are deceived into thinking God can be deceived, ignoring the commandment delivered by Paul: *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap”* (Galatians 6:7). As human beings, we naturally sow transgression, and so we can only reap death unless we repent of that transgression. There is no escape from that destiny if we remain in transgression. There is nowhere to hide.

*“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy”* (Proverbs 28:13). Before a righteous King, all mankind is criminal – we are all guilty of transgression. *“For God has consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy on all”* (Romans 11:32 ESV).

This disobedience, this transgression, is what is called sin. Everyone is guilty of sin regardless of whether they will admit it, for *“if we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves”* (1 John 1:8a). Therefore, it only remains for us to confess our sins if we hope to prosper (or succeed) in life. This is not physical life—it is Eternal Life.

We see that it is not enough to simply confess our sins, as many among the wicked will happily tell us the wicked deeds that they have done. We must also forsake (or repent) of sin to obtain God’s mercy.

The world seems content to take advantage of God’s mercy to continue in their sin, mistaking God’s patience as proof of His non-existence, ignorance, or tolerance. Even as Believers, the Apostles warned us not to abuse the freedom we are given by God’s mercy. How many people calling themselves Christians *“think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and*

*patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4) God’s mercy gives us freedom, and we are instructed to “act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God” (1 Peter 2:16).*

Why is there a warning to the world and to Believers about using God’s mercy as a cloak for sin? Because regardless of what we believe, *“the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS” (Matthew 16:27). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).*

This will not be voluntary. The account of our deeds will be entirely and completely compulsory. It will be utterly thorough without room for embellishment or exaggeration to soften, bias, or impress the One to whom it is delivered. There will be no room for a case, no stirring defense or blustering counteraccusations in animated language. There will be no defense lawyer to help wiggle men out of the situation by coloring his client as a victim, as a product of his upbringing and experience with no responsibility for the actions he has committed.

Why is there no room for argument? Because the Word of God will be judging us: *“For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:12-13 ESV).* We are completely and utterly exposed before the eyes of God. He sees all. What we truly are behind our face is cast into the light, and there is utterly nothing left for the hypocrite to shift blame onto or to hide behind.

For the Believer, it is a good thing that God cannot be duped, because we will stand before the One who has covered our sin with His own offering of salvation—His gift of redemption – and He will see it in us by His discerning Word! As Believers, we have security in our standing: *“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16).*

Whether a man believes or not, our transgressions can never remain concealed, because the thoughts and intents of our heart are known to God. Everything is exposed to God and we must all give account. Therefore, the only option available to man is to confess his sin, repent of his transgression, and obtain mercy at the hands of our High Priest, Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us before the Heavenly Father. If we do not, then our guilt remains on our heads, and we must bear the punishment without the intercession and blood of Jesus Christ that removes the guilt of sin. That punishment is separation from God, which is what Jesus endured in His death on the cross when He took the sins of all mankind upon Himself and bore our guilt before God.

Thankfully for Believers, Jesus rose again, entered into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God interceding for those who accept His atonement for their sins and have thus parted with the guilt of their sin before God. If we forsake our sin, we should be confident that we are no longer deemed guilty before God, through the blood of Jesus Christ, and we can approach the Throne of God through prayer in our times of need, and we will be with Him in eternity because Jesus has been made the Truth, the Life, and the Way to communion with God. Jesus has been made God’s mercy towards us, so *“that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16b).* Even so, Amen.