**MERCIFUL GOD**

Sunday School Lesson 8

*The Attributes of God*

Psalm 103:8

7/18/2021

**Introduction:** For our eighth lesson on the attributes of God, we are going to look at His mercy. If it were possible to determine which attribute of God is the greatest of them all in relation to its impact on mankind, I believe that His mercy would be at the top of the list. To think that a self-existent, immutable, omnipresent, omnipotent, self-sufficient, jealous, and omniscient God would show mercy to man is just really hard to fathom! Like the psalmist, we ought to be led of the Spirit to ask, “What is man, that thou art mindful of Him?” As we consider the mercy of God, we must first seek to define what mercy is. It is best described as benevolence, mildness, or tenderness of heart which disposes a person to overlook injuries, or to treat an offender better than he deserves. Mercy tempers justice and forbears punishment, and it causes an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries. You will not find any good synonym in all of the English language that matches up with mercy. It is very unique in its qualities, and it ultimately belongs to God above all else. As believers, we are to strive to be merciful as the Heavenly Father is merciful (Luke 6:36). Truly, there is no man that could ever claim to show mercy on the level that God has shown mercy to us. The Bible tells us that He is merciful. He is plenteous in His mercy.

1. **HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE FULL OF THE MERCYOF THE LORD.**
2. **Notice that the mercy of the Lord stretches across the entire earth (Psalm 119:64; Romans 5:12).** There is no place on this earth that can claim to have never experienced the mercy of the Lord. The earth is full of His mercy. It is seen every single day that the earth continues to exist. If all of the people on this earth were to never sin again, the earth would still bear out the mercy of the Lord. That’s because the world was condemned with the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Every day of life on this earth since that time has borne out the mercy of God in it. There will never be a single person who will be able to stand before God and properly claim that they never witnessed His mercy. We can also consider the fact that the earth is the place that needs the mercy of the Lord. That’s because mankind willfully denies His mercy and continues to disobey Him. There are very few on this earth that have received the mercy of the Lord. That’s sad when you consider how abundant His mercy is on the earth. It is so easily available for all of mankind. Yet, most choose to reject that mercy, and each day of life that they live further exasperates their need for the mercy of the Lord.
3. **Notice that the mercy of the Lord even extends up into the heavens (Psalm 36:5, 57:10, 108:4).** The book of Psalms tells us that the mercy of the Lord is not confined to this earth. His mercy reaches up into the heavens. How are we to consider this truth? Well, first, it is expressive of the extant of His mercy. It cannot be measured here on earth. It is so much greater than that. If there were other places for the Lord to show His mercy, He would show it there. Obviously, the earth is the main object of His mercy. Yet, we could also consider that even the fallen angels and Satan himself have benefited from the mercy of the Lord. Undoubtedly, the Lord could have chosen to seal up Satan from the time of his fall from Heaven. Instead, He was given a season of freedom that will ultimately end with his eternal captivity. Of course, Heaven is also full of the mercy of the Lord. Every child of God that dwells there is daily experiencing the mercy of the Lord. The mercy of the Lord is infinite in its substance just as the many other attributes of the Lord. He is infinite. His existence is infinite. His power and knowledge is infinite. His mercy is infinite!
4. **THE MERCY OF THE LORD IS ETERNAL TO THOSE THAT FEAR HIM.**
5. **Notice that the Lord’s mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him (Psalm 100:5, 103:11-17, 118:4; Isaiah 54:8 Luke 1:50).** While the earth is full of the mercy of the Lord, each person’s experience with that mercy will be different. As mentioned, some have never recognized the mercy of the Lord. As a result, they will never know the depths of His mercy. Yet, for those who fear the Lord, the Bible tells us that the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting. Who are those who fear the Lord? They are those who obey His Word. Obedience starts in salvation. No one can claim to truly fear the Lord if they have not received His Son in faith. In fact, our fear of the Father will naturally drive us to the Son as our Redeemer. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the item that causes eternal mercy to be experienced! Wouldn’t it be great if more people in this world feared the Lord? Why did David get to experience so much of the Lord’s mercy? The answer is that when he was presented with his sin, he bowed himself in fear unto the Lord.
6. **Notice that the Lord’s mercy endureth forever upon His children (1 Chronicles 16:34-41; 2 Chronicles 5:13, 7:6, 20:21; Ezra 3:11; Psalm 100:5, 106:1, 107:1, 117:2 118:1-4, Psalm 136:1-26, 138:8; Jeremiah 33:11; Hebrews 8:12).** The Bible does not lack for references regarding the eternal state of God’s mercy. There is a particular phrase that is found repeatedly in the Bible. The mercy of the Lord endureth forever. Have you ever stopped to consider what the Bible is saying in that statement? His mercy does not just exist forever. His mercy is actively working forever. His mercy is actively dealing with injury forever. Could you eternally show mercy over something or someone that wronged you? It is amazing to consider that the mercy of the Lord is capable of enduring forever. God will never stop being merciful to His children. His mercy will never reach a conclusion when it comes to the born-again believer. It will continue enduring infinitely. Many of us can barely get our mercy to endure through more than one offense. Yet, God’s mercy endures forever.
7. **THE MERCY OF THE LORD IS GIVEN TO THOSE WHO ARE MERCIFUL.**
8. **Notice that the Lord Jesus promised that those who are merciful will obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7; Luke 6:36).** Jesus said blessed are the merciful. Throughout His earthly ministry, the Lord taught this principle of the merciful receiving mercy. He gave the example of the judge that forgave the debt and the debtor who did not. The mercy that was shown to the debtor was taken away when it was found out that he was not merciful to the person who owed him a debt. While the children of God have an eternal promise of His mercy when it comes to the condition of our eternal soul, we should not expect for the Lord to be merciful to us on a day-to-day basis if we are not being merciful to others. Again, we must remember that being merciful is more than just being forgiving. Forgiveness may still expect to collect a just punishment for the offense. Mercy does not need to collect anything further. Some Christians feel justified in their behavior because they have given out forgiveness, but I wonder when we have last offered mercy to someone?
9. **Notice that the Old Testament tells us that the Lord will show His mercy to the merciful (Psalm 18:25; Proverbs 11:17; 2 Samuel 22:26).** King David declared in his son in 2 Samuel 22 that the Lord shows mercy to those who are merciful. David tried to live this out. There were several people who had wronged him, but David was not a vengeful man. He showed true mercy on several occasions in his life. Perhaps, the reason for this mercy is that he knew he needed the mercy of the Lord on his own life. When we consider how much we need God’s mercy, it should prompt us to show more mercy to those around us. David was merciful to King Saul. He could have killed him. David was merciful to his own children. David was also merciful to Mephibosheth. He was probably most merciful to Shimei. This was a man who openly cursed the king. His mighty men wanted to kill Shimei, but David would not let them. David was at an especially weak time in his life. It would have been easy and even understandable for him to lash out on this wicked man. Yet, David showed mercy, and God showed him mercy many times!
10. **OUTSIDE OF PROMISED SALVATION, THE MERCY OF THE LORD IS NOT GUARANTEED.**
11. **Notice that no individual has a right to expect God’s mercy unless He has promised it (Romans 9:15-23).** The book of Romans shows us that God will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy. On the other hand, God will harden the heart of the one who He chooses. Some might try to paint this as unfair or unreasonable, but mercy does not require equity. Justice requires equity. Mercy is given out solely at the will and discretion of the one who has it to give. Ultimately, every man who has been given life at all has obtained some measure of mercy from the Lord. Additionally, every person has the offering of the greatest measure of God’s mercy in the opportunity of salvation. If a person chooses not to accept that mercy, that is a personal choice. They should not expect for God to continuously beg them to be saved. It is certainly true that some may hear the Gospel presented more times than others. They will not be able to hold this against the Lord. Mankind brought sin and judgment upon Himself. God does not have to measure out mercy equal to mercy shown to Him because He has never needed mercy.
12. **Notice that the point of mercy is that it is given to those who are undeserving of it (Hosea 2:23, 6:6; Matthew 9:13).** The Old Testament prophet Hosea warned Israel of the Lord giving His mercy to a people that were not deserving of it. Obviously, this is referring to the salvation that has been shown to the Gentiles. Later, in the same book of the Bible, we find that the Lord desired mercy for Israel more than sacrifice. The Lord Jesus repeated this in the New Testament. The point of this was to show that God wanted to show His mercy to Israel, but they did not think that they needed it. At other times, they might have thought that they deserved it. That’s what we find in the New Testament. That’s why Jesus told them that He came to save sinners. There has never been a worthy recipient of the mercy of the Lord. The very definition of mercy proves out that we are undeserving of it. When it is offered, we ought to gladly accept it from the Lord. There is no guarantee or promise that it will be offered again.