

forgiveness



## *Have Mercy*

*Matthew 18:21–35*

*Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times"*

*September 14, 2014*

### **Thought For The Week**

Scriptures: Psalms 103: 8, James 3: 17, Luke 9: 55, 56

Just about anyone who has spent any time reading the Bible, will quickly come to the conclusion that a large part of the life of a disciple is trying to balance one Biblical principle with another.

*One of the more evident of these balancing acts is justice and mercy.*

We can recall time after time of how Israel wouldn't uphold God's judgment on sin. Their toleration of idolatry and immoral behaviors brought them disaster time and time again. Yet, in spite of all of the admonition for justice, the Bible is equally full of teachings concerning mercy.

The word "mercy" occurs 276 times in the Bible.

The first occurrence in the New Testament is at the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus tells his disciples "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." *One of the most basic qualities of our God is mercy.* "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." (Ps. 103:8) Godly wisdom is "full of mercy." (James 3:17)

*So how do we uphold God's justice and be merciful at the same time?*

It is easy for us to err on the side of mercy and adopt an "anything goes" mentality. Yet, this does not seem in keeping with the character of the prophets, apostles or Christ. They all spoke out loudly and often concerning right teaching and conduct.

We can easily adopt the "God's vigilante" mentality. We can make it our job to sniff out, expose and punish any deviation from the Divine standard of doctrine or morality.

This too is sadly lacking in a balanced perspective.

James and John needed to learn this when they wanted to command fire to come from heaven to destroy the Samaritans who would not receive Christ.

Jesus "turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Luke 9:55,56)

Perhaps the proper balance is best illustrated in Christ's example of the woman taken in adultery.

It shows that God's moral standard was upheld while mercy was shown.

In the account, a woman is caught in the act of adultery. In seeking to defame Jesus, the Pharisees and

scribes bring her to Jesus to see what he will do.

His first act is to destroy the misguided vigilante mentality.

“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,” Jesus says.

After they have gone, Jesus asks her, “Woman, where are those thine accusers?”

Hath no man condemned thee?” She responds “No man, Lord.”

In upholding God’s Divine standard, Jesus tells her, “Neither do I condemn thee: *go, and sin no more.*”

By telling her to sin no more, Jesus upholds the righteousness of God.

By showing mercy, he demonstrates his Father’s character.

So how do we uphold God’s justice and be merciful at the same time?

The answer is easily stated, but harder to do.

*Be merciful without changing the divinely instituted standards of doctrine and morality.*

*Work only for the eternal salvation of all those involved.*

*An important lesson for today:*

*Mercy is not necessarily tolerance of sin &*

*Justice is not necessarily intolerance toward an individual.*

*Know this:*

*Mercy and justice meet at repentance.*

Have a great week!

*Happy Birthday Kathy (9/17), Laurie (9/18) & Kim (9/20)*

God’s Grace is

**IMMEASURABLE,**

His Mercy is

**INEXHAUSTIBLE,**

His Peace is

**INEXPRESSIBLE.**

## **Prayer for Peace**

God of all, we praise you. We give thanks for this time to remember your goodness, your loving care, your guidance, and your plan for creation to be at peace. Forgive us for not remembering your peace and being guilty of acts and thoughts that do not promote the peace and mission of Christ.

We uphold for your blessing of peace the nation of Albania. Guide their leaders and people as they strive to find peaceful resolution to tensions in their country. Bless all who are not bound by political borders but see all neighbors as brothers and sisters. We pray for the needs and concerns of those gathered here; may we all be embraced by your spirit of love and peace. May your name be praised, O God of all creation. *Amen*

## **Stewardship Thought For The Week**

*“Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?’” John 11:40*

Many of us say that we believe in God. We go to church on Sunday.

We volunteer for events at our church.

But when life gets hard, the pressure is on; things aren’t going our way,

do we really believe, do we really put our trust in the Lord?

When we live a life of gratitude, being thankful for the gifts we have been given, we really do see that God is providing all that we need.