

# Take These 3 Invaluable Steps to Abide in Spirit-Led Mercy

The young man was raging with anger. He was just a boy really, but his anger and actions were those of someone older. A bigger boy had been teasing him and in his fun had unwittingly stepped into an area that instantly incited rage.

The fun quickly changed to fighting, and the fighting became a matter of survival for the one doing the teasing. He was warding off fists and kicks when suddenly he was thrown to the ground on his back and out of nowhere a sharp object was pointing at his heart.

Just as quickly, a man in his early 20s was standing over both of them and had the attacker by the arm, preventing him from stabbing the boy on the ground. "What are you doing?" he yelled at the attacker. "Stop this now!"

He pulled the attacker off the boy who had been teasing him. The 20-year-old was a volunteer police officer; he showed his badge and told the young man he was under arrest. The boy who had been doing the teasing jumped up and ran home.

The volunteer policeman and the attacker began walking down the street. "I am not going to cuff you or take you to the station. Instead, I am going take you to another office, and you will receive a different kind of sentencing."

They continued walking and talking. The boy shared his struggle with anger, and the officer spoke calmly and compassionately.

Instead of hearing the yelling and demeaning words he was used to, the troubled boy heard words of care and encouragement. The walk and conversation continued for a lengthy time, and to the boy's surprise, he and the officer entered a YMCA

building.

The officer took the boy to the YMCA manager's office and sentenced him to one month of weekly attendance of YMCA activities.

The officer never made an official record of the attempted murder.

This volunteer police officer's act of mercy along with the kindness and positive Christian atmosphere of the YMCA were the initial steps that would lead this 10-year-old boy to life transformation.

Six years later, after this same boy gave way to another explosion of anger, a Christian leader showed him a similar act of mercy. This act of mercy led that boy to a full encounter with Almighty God, which brought him to repentance and a born-again experience.

This wonderful triumph of mercy is not unlike the event that took place in Jericho two millennia ago.

Jesus Christ was completing a ministry journey that took Him from the Galilee Region back to Jerusalem. He traveled through the city of Jericho. A huge crowd gathered around Him as He was passing through the city.

One man who desperately wanted to see Jesus climbed a tree to get a full view of Him. The Lord looked up and, seeing the man in the tree, said, "Zacchaeus, come down. I want to eat dinner at your house today."

Many in the crowd were offended.

This man was the chief tax collector in that area. He had become very wealthy through corruption and from overtaxing people. How could this prophet of God go to the home of someone so unclean?

Didn't He know what this man was like?

Jesus was not moved by the emotions of the crowd or the opinions of the critical and judgmental religious leaders. He shared love and compassion with a man who desperately needed what he could not earn and certainly did not deserve.

Before that day was over, a corrupt and dishonest tax collector repented of his sin and made restitution. Jesus declared, "Today, salvation has come to this house." Mercy had triumphed!

That is God's great desire for every person.

Look with me at the words of Jesus on another occasion with another tax collector. Again, there were people complaining and criticizing Jesus for going to the home of a man so corrupt. Again, the religious leaders were critical and judgmental of a prophet of God associating with someone unclean. Matthew, the tax collector for the region around Capernaum, became Matthew an apostle of Jesus Christ. The words of our Lord to the religious leaders on this occasion are profound.

*"But go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matt. 9:13).*

Faith is not only measured by how much a person sacrifices to serve the Lord but by how much mercy they show to those around them.

Every day there are those around who do not deserve kindness or compassion.

There are co-workers, neighbors and family members who treat people disrespectfully or who are belligerent. They don't deserve words of love and affirmation, but they desperately need them.

Every one of us has someone in our lives who hurts us deeply or offended us greatly. They do not deserve blessing and kindness but punishment for what they have done. But they desperately need mercy. Who will show them how to find Calvary and the forgiveness that only comes from the loving heart of our Lord Jesus Christ?

If mercy is to triumph, three things must happen.

**1.** There must be people who have experienced mercy and are humbled by the magnitude of the love and forgiveness from Almighty God and the Christians who have influenced their lives.

**2.** Those who have experienced mercy must allow the Holy Spirit to wash their eyes, their ears and their minds with the love, mercy and grace of Almighty God. This will enable them see others with the eyes of God's love. This will open their ears to hear the cries of the desperate ones around them. This will clear their minds to think of others with the compassion and grace of heavenly Father.

**3.** Those who have experienced mercy must give mercy to those who do not deserve it and cannot earn it. They must release all accounts and all judgment against those who have deeply hurt them, greatly offended them and painfully abused them. The release of mercy to those who have caused personal injury will open their hearts to give mercy to those around them who are sinful and unlovable.

Mercy freely received and freely given will open the gateway for mercy to flow to those around us who have no knowledge of God or the great love expressed at Calvary.

It is not a denial of wrong and sinful behavior. It is not overlooking evil and corruption. Rather, it is the full recognition that sinful people desperately need the grace of a loving Savior who can transform their lives.

Mercy triumphed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Mercy triumphed on Mount Calvary.

Mercy triumphed in the empty tomb.

Mercy triumphs in the heart of every sinner who encounters the love and grace of Almighty God and is born again. {eoa}

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