

## *Acts 1: Lesson Twelve, Romans, Part 2*

### *Romans 9 – 16*

**Subject:** Paul explained the continuity of God's plan of salvation with regard to Israel and called believers to live in view of God's mercy.

**Main Idea:** When the Biblical doctrine of God's mercy settles down deep in our hearts, it changes the way we treat others.

**Principles:**

1. *God's mercy is the only reason any Jewish or Gentile person is saved.*
2. *In view of God's mercy to us, we ought to demonstrate love, honor, and compassion to others.*

### **Introduction**

Mercy is one of the sweetest terms in the Christian vocabulary. Simply put, it is the attribute of God that disposes Him to be *actively* compassionate.<sup>1</sup> In Romans 9-16, Paul concludes the doctrinal portion of his letter and presents its practical application, using the word mercy twelve times.

As we have learned, the overarching theme of Romans is the gospel. In chapters 1-8, Paul explained the desperate condition of Jews and Gentiles: all are sinners and under a death penalty. The good news is that God sent His Son to do what we cannot do for ourselves: Jesus lived the righteous life we cannot live and died to pay our debt. For reasons we cannot understand, God is willing to graciously accept Christ's death in substitute for our own and impute and impart Christ's righteousness to all who put their faith in Him.

Chapters 1-8 end on a note of assurance. However, Paul's largely Gentile audience might have had trouble receiving this assurance if he hadn't gone on to answer another question in chapters 9-11: what about God's promises to the Jews? According to the Old Testament, God entered a covenant with Israel, promising to make *them* His people. Did the coming of Jesus Christ and the salvation of Gentiles represent a change in God's plan? If God did not keep His word to Israel, how can Gentiles be sure that God will keep His promise to save those who believe?

Paul addressed these potential concerns by explaining something more about the way in which God saves people. He showed that God's word to Israel has not failed and that there is continuity in God's plan of salvation. In short, Paul did this by explaining that God's Old Testament promise of salvation was always intended as a promise to *elect* Jews, and there is continuity in God's plan because the Jews and Gentiles that have been saved in every age have been elected on the basis of God's mercy.

## I. Salvation as a Result of God's Mercy – Romans 9-11

### A. Salvation by Election – Romans 9

#### i. Historical Basis of Election – 9:1-13

1. *Paul's Anguish* – 9:1-5: Paul was greatly distressed by the Jews' rejection of God, especially in light of the great privileges they possessed. He acknowledged the fact of these privileges in chapter 3 (3:1-2), but in chapter 11, he gave a fuller list of their privileges. Their rejection pained Paul so greatly that he wished he could give up his salvation for their sake. He knew this was impossible, but the sentiment expressed his sincere anguish.
2. *Isaac and Jacob's Election* – 9:6-13: Paul was getting to his first point, that God had never promised to save every single Jew. God's promised blessing on Israel has not failed because His promise ("word") to take a people and make them His own was not directed to *physical* Israel but to *spiritual* Israel. Furthermore, from the beginning, God has always saved people on the basis of *election*. Paul assumed his readers would be familiar with Old Testament history and pointed to the patriarchal family as evidence that God never intended to save every single descendant of Abraham. God worked through *one* of Abraham's sons, Isaac, bypassing his older brother Ishmael. For those who might argue that Isaac, not Ishmael, was the "son of the promise" (Genesis 17:19), Paul gave a second more convincing example: God also chose *one* of the twins of this "son of the promise" (Jacob), while rejecting the other (Esau).
  - a. *God's Hatred of Esau*: Paul quoted God's word to Malachi about these brothers saying, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." In the context, Malachi was answering the Jews' question of how God had shown His love to them. God's answer was that He had shown His love in choosing their forefather Jacob. His hatred for Esau wasn't absolute hatred but only relative to His love for Jacob.
  - b. *Not by Works*: God had given the twins' mother Rebekah a prophecy that He had chosen the younger twin over the older one: "before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad in order that His purpose in election might stand" (9:11). Paul's point is that God's election is on the basis of His choice, not our works, and He has always operated by electing some, but not all, biological descendants of Abraham.

ii. The Question of God's Justice – 9:14-29

1. *God's Mercy*: This discussion raises a question in the human mind about God's justice. Paul's answer to that question can be summed up in one word: mercy. By definition, mercy is undeserved. No one deserves God's salvation. In the opening chapters, Paul went to great lengths to explain human depravity and that "no one is righteous, not even one" (3:10). God is under no obligation to show any of us mercy. However, because it is His nature to be merciful, He has spared a few from the punishment that we all deserve.
2. *Not Dependent on Human Desire or Effort*: Paul restated that God's election is not dependent on human desire or effort. It is solely based on His sovereign freedom.
3. *Mercy on Whom I Have Mercy*
  - a. *Not Fatalism*
    - i. Paul said that God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy and hardens who He wants to harden. Paul was not teaching fatalism or predeterminism, in which every human thought and action is a mechanical response to what God has already decreed. Nowhere does the Bible present God as an impersonal tyrant who operates with disregard for His creatures. Rather, it shows that He is a loving and very personal Being.<sup>ii</sup>
    - ii. Paul did not address man's free will because that was not his subject. "His big point here is that the relationship between God and sinners cannot be thought of simply in terms of justice. We have no claim on God, no rights before him. We are dependent on His mercy."<sup>iii</sup> Furthermore, "to fault God for showing mercy to some while hardening others is to require that He conform to our fallible and arbitrary concept of justice."<sup>iv</sup>
  - b. *Pharaoh's Hardening*: Paul mentioned Pharaoh as an example of God's sovereignty in salvation history. God hardened Pharaoh in order that His power would be known and displayed in rescuing Israel from Pharaoh's tyrannical rule. God hardened Pharaoh in order to accomplish His purposes in salvation history. The hardening was not related to Pharaoh's personal destiny. Additionally, the related passages in Genesis show that God hardened Pharaoh's heart only after Pharaoh hardened his own heart against God. Paul is showing that God, as Creator, is free to work as He pleases in human history.

4. *Why Does God Blame Us?* Paul addressed another question that would logically come to his readers' minds: "Then why does God still blame us?" (9:19). Paul did not actually answer the question (and perhaps that should be a word of advice to us as well). He simply replies, "Who are you, a human being, to talk back to God?" (9:21). Does creation have the right to question the actions of their Creator?
  5. *The Objects of God's Wrath:* In 9:22, Paul said that God "bore with great patience the objects of His wrath – prepared for destruction." God prepares for destruction those who oppose and refuse Him, but He has patiently delayed final judgment. 2 Peter 3:9 explains that God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance. Earlier in Romans, Paul stated that God's kindness, forbearance, and patience is intended to lead the unsaved to repentance (2:4).
  6. *The Objects of God's Mercy:* God's focus is His glory and the objects of His mercy, some of whom are Jews and some of whom are Gentiles. At present, these are largely Gentiles. Paul applied passages from Hosea that in their original context applied to Israel to the saving of Gentiles. With regard to the Jews, Paul quoted from Isaiah to show that from the beginning, God had never saved every single Jew but only a remnant (just as is true with Gentiles).
- iii. Paul's Conclusion – 9:30-33: In verses 30-33, Paul concluded that presently, Gentiles are the ones primarily being saved because they are the ones seeking salvation by faith rather than by works. The Jews stumbled over the idea of faith in Jesus Christ the Messiah. They bear responsibility for this choice, despite God's sovereignty in election. Pride is the enemy of faith. It takes humility to admit that we can't earn our salvation.
- iv. The Biblical Doctrine of Election
1. *Mysterious Tension between Two Biblical Truths:* We have already said that the Bible does not teach that God has predetermined all of our choices but rather, presents us as genuine persons with the freedom to make real choices.<sup>v</sup> The facts that God elects to salvation and that man nevertheless remains accountable are clear enough, but the seeming paradox between the two has led to much discussion about *how* God elects.
  2. *Calvinism and Arminianism:* Two opposing views of the doctrine of election are represented in the teachings of John Calvin (1509-1564) and Jacobus Arminius (1588-1603). Churches that follow the reformed tradition, such as Presbyterians and some Baptists, are Calvinistic in their teachings. Methodists and Wesleyans are among those who hold the Arminian view. While some hold strictly to one

view or another, today many scholars lean toward one view but moderate their positions on certain aspects. The differences in Calvinistic and Arminian theology go far beyond the discussion of election.

- a. With regard to election, Calvinism teaches that God elects *unconditionally*; that is, He chose the elect based entirely on His own advance planning and *not on advance information* about which people would believe.
  - b. Arminians believe that God elects based on His foreknowledge of each individual's free choice.
  - c. While the Calvinists say this is limiting God's freedom in election, Arminians argue that human responsibility demands that each person has the freedom to make this choice entirely on his own.
  - d. The Calvinists' response is that such a view makes man a participator with Christ in salvation and detracts from salvation being utterly a work of God to His glory alone. They would also say that man's responsibility does not conflict with God's election.
3. *Conclusion*: Paul made no attempt to harmonize God's sovereign choosing with human freedom. There is a mysterious tension between these two biblical truths and we must allow for it. We are wise not to go to extreme measures to explain doctrines that the Bible does not. Attempts to explain one often weaken another. As Paul concluded, "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?" (11:34). Our limited human reasoning cannot fully grasp divine mysteries of this sort.

## **B. Salvation by Faith upon Hearing – Romans 10**

### **i. Salvation Has Historically Come by Faith (Not Works) – 10:1-13**

1. Chapter 9 ends with the Jews stumbling over Christ. Paul again stated his deep concern for his fellow Jews. They were zealous but mistaken, he wrote. They sought God by works rather than by faith. To be saved by the law, we must keep it perfectly (10:5), and that is something no one can do. As examples of our inability to reach God, Paul asked who among us could possibly ascend into heaven or bring Christ up from the grave.
2. By contrast, the salvation that is by faith knows that God has come near to us. His word is in the very heart and mouth of all who receive Him. Verse 9 and 10 indicate that salvation comes by an outward profession of Jesus' divinity stemming from a profound conviction of this truth in one's heart.

3. In 10:11, Paul repeated the Old Testament promise that he quoted in 9:33: “Anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.” This beautiful guarantee is woven like a golden thread throughout the scriptures (Isaiah 28:16, 49:23, Psalm 22:5, 25:2-3, etc.).
- ii. Salvation Has Always Followed the Hearing and Receiving of the Gospel – 10:14-21: Paul has said that many have stumbled (especially ethnic Israel at present) but the elect have been saved by faith. Perhaps he anticipated another question: “If only the elect will be saved, should we bother evangelizing?” His answer was a resounding, “Yes!” In fact, it is *because* of God’s election that we can be sure that some will respond. However, we should not expect that all will respond. As an example, many Gentiles are being saved at present but only a few Jews. However, this does not mean that God has dealt unfairly with the Jews. They clearly heard the truth (10:17-18). “Grace is clear throughout Scripture, and if they did not know it, that was because they had not taken sufficient notice of what God had said to them. It was all there, in Scripture.”<sup>vi</sup> But they responded disobediently and obstinately.

### C. What about Israel? – Romans 11

- i. Salvation Has Only Ever Come to a Remnant – 11:1-11: In chapter 11, Paul finally answered the question: “Did God reject His people Israel?” In a sense, this was the very question Elijah had asked God in his day. In fact, the majority of Jews had not sought the Lord throughout Israel’s history. Paul’s answer was that God has by no means rejected Israel. Just as He reserved a remnant of Jews in Elijah’s day, He is even now saving a remnant. Paul himself was an example. Have the Jews stumbled so as to fall beyond recovery (11:11)? Again, Paul answered, “Not at all!” Rather, their stumbling initiated a process in which they will become envious of the Gentiles and ultimately, be saved.
- ii. Salvation Has Always Been Rooted in Jewish History – 11:12-25: In 11:25, Paul said, “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited.” While the Jews were presently guilty of assuming that they merited salvation on the basis of their heritage and their works, Paul was concerned that his Gentile audience might also presume upon God’s mercy. It seems that some of them had begun to look down upon the Jews. Paul reminded these Gentiles that they had no basis for boasting.
  1. Since salvation history has its roots in Jewish stock and yet some of the Jews were cut off, were not the Gentiles whose history was rooted in depravity all the more likely to be cut off? The Gentiles needed to remember God’s mercy in saving them and not regard the Jews with contempt.

2. Furthermore, if the Gentiles had been blessed with salvation at a time in history when most of the Jews rejected it, wouldn't they be even more greatly blessed by the Jews' full reception of the gospel (since, as Paul is about to explain, it will mark the culmination of history and the establishment of Christ's kingdom)?
- iii. Salvation Will Yet Come to the Jews En Masse – 11:25-32
1. *“All Israel Will Be Saved”*: The mystery to which Paul referred in 11:25 concerns God's place for Israel in His plan of salvation. Paul said that when the full number of the Gentiles has come in, all Israel will be saved. This passage has been understood in a variety of ways.
    - a. Earlier in church history, the Reformers understood the phrase “all Israel will be saved” to mean that *all who have been appointed by God to salvation* will be brought into God's family by means of Israel's hardening and the salvation of Gentiles. In other words, the Reformers understood “Israel” to be the “Israel of God” (that is, *all believers*). However, Paul has been speaking of ethnic Israel throughout Romans and therefore, it would be strange for him to suddenly use the term in a different sense.
    - b. A more obvious meaning of “all Israel will be saved” is that at some future point in history, there will be a large-scale turning of the Jews to salvation in Jesus. It would contradict all Paul has taught to see this as happening in any way except by a personal decision of faith in Jesus. Additionally, to say that “all Israel” will be saved is to mean the great majority, not every single Jew. Apparently, the mystery is that God will eventually bring about the salvation of a large number of Jews by causing them to become envious of His work among Gentiles.
  2. *All Bound over to Disobedience that All May Receive Mercy*: Verse 32 says, “For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on them all.” The binding over to disobedience takes us back to chapters 1-2, where Paul discussed human depravity and the fact that we all deserved to be under God's judgment. But Paul said, “So that He may have mercy *on them all*.” This is not a statement of universal salvation in which God ultimately saves every single human being. Rather, the “all” are the elect Jews and elect Gentiles. All of these are saved in the same manner: by God's mercy.

- iv. Paul's Doxology – 11:33-36: Having written that all are sinners and deserve judgment, that God has provided a way of salvation by faith in Jesus, and that the undeserving who receive Christ's righteousness become His co-heirs and share in His glory, Paul can no longer contain himself and breaks out in praise to God for the depths of the riches of His wisdom and knowledge.

**Summary Statement:** In Romans 9-11, Paul explained that God kept His “word” to Israel because that “word” was not directed “simply to physical Israel”<sup>vii</sup> but to all of the elect. God’s plan of salvation has continuity since elect Jews and Gentiles have always and only been saved by faith and as a result of God’s mercy.

**Principle:** *God’s mercy is the only reason any Jewish or Gentile person is saved.*

Nine of the twelve occurrences of the word “mercy” in Romans 9-16 are in chapters 9-11. In its original languages, the Bible employs several different words to convey the concept of mercy, as reflected in the variety of synonyms used in translation: “kindness,” “lovingkindness,” “goodness,” “grace,” “favor,” “pity,” “compassion,” and “steadfast love.”<sup>viii</sup> God’s mercy is far more than mere emotion. It is His *active response* to our desperate need: He sent His beloved Son to die and save those who put their faith in Him.

**Application:** If we are ever to grow in Christ, we must know the doctrines of the Bible. Paul says Israel had zeal but lacked knowledge. (10:2-3). They failed to grasp the essential truths of salvation. When we first come to Christ, we are infants in the faith. At this stage, there is often a great deal of insecurity about our salvation because we do not yet know much about the mercy of God. We may feel a great deal of sentiment, but feelings come and go. In order to grow, we need a firmer foundation. We need biblical truth (Bible doctrines). Sadly, many believers rarely bother to study their Bibles and as a result, they never move beyond spiritual infancy their entire lives.

When we come to understand the doctrine of God’s mercy, that it is one of His divine attributes and as such, is infinite, we stop fearing that once we have come to Him, He may yet reject us. To despise God’s mercy is to fall under His judgement. To receive it is to experience it in full. This knowledge allows us to live with greater security in our faith. Former fears are replaced with rejoicing in His constant mercy.

If you have received Christ by faith, do you in your deepest heart still fear that God has not completely forgiven you? Do you find yourself drained in Christian service? If so, why is that? Could it be because you serve in slavery to fear, not fully understanding the nature of God’s mercy? Do you imagine God viewing you with a scowl? How would it change your relationship to know that His nature disposes Him to view you, His elect child, with active and unending compassion?

**Transition:** Romans 11 concludes the doctrinal portion of Paul’s letter to the Romans. But doctrine, when properly understood and humbly received, results in spiritual transformation. In Romans 12:1, Paul urged us to consider the impact God’s mercy on our attitudes and actions.

## II. Practical Exhortations in View of God’s Mercy – Romans 12-16

### A. Renouncing the World, Renewing the Mind – 12:1-2

- i. Offer Your Bodies as Living Sacrifices – 12:1: The first response to God’s mercy that Paul named is the offering of our bodies (that is, our whole person) in obedience to God as a symbolic sacrifice. The Old Testament animal sacrifices were rendered obsolete by Christ’s sacrificial death. True worship is offering God our lives.
- ii. Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind – 12:2: Paul said we should not be conformed to this world but transformed by the renewing of our minds. As the Holy Spirit renews our minds through the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible study, meditation, and worship, we begin to see God more and more as our friend and not our enemy. We see God’s ways and will as the very good things they are and we start embracing them. The renewing of our minds makes it possible “for people belonging temporally to ‘this age’ to live as heirs of the age to come.”<sup>ix</sup> The Bible never presents doctrine just for the sake of knowledge but because changed thinking results in changed behavior.

### B. Specific Obligations in View of God’s Mercy – 12:3-15:13: After

summarizing the believer’s obligations in view of God’s mercy in verses 1-2, Paul spelled out specific duties in 12:3-15:13, beginning with our attitude toward others in the Church.

- i. Properly Viewing and Exercising Our Place in Christ’s Church – 12:3-16
  1. *Zealous in Exercising Gifts*: 12:3-8 constitutes one of three New Testament lists of spiritual gifts (also 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4). The three lists are not identical and not intended to be exhaustive. The list in Romans 12 includes prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, and showing mercy. The main emphasis in the three lists is that all believers have at least one spiritual gift, which they are expected to use it for the benefit of the entire body of believers (the Church). Although we are diverse, when we cooperate as God intends, everyone benefits.
  2. *Sober Self-Evaluation in Exercising Gifts*
    - a. In this context, Paul reminded us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought but rather, to evaluate ourselves soberly. He already mentioned the arrogant predisposition of some of the Gentiles toward despising the Jews. Perhaps

their haughty attitude even extended to Jewish Christians. Spiritual pride is the worst kind of pride. All of our talents (spiritual gifts and natural abilities) are gifts of God's grace. In view of God's mercy, the cost of His Son's sacrifice, and the gifts He has given us, we must recognize every believer's great value to God.

- b. We judge ourselves soberly *not* by *evaluating our own giftedness* but by *measuring our faith in God to make us useful* (Romans 12:3). We mustn't trivialize our worth or fail to develop our gifts. Rather, we must recognize our great value to God and not disparage others or ourselves.

### 3. *Expressing Love in Attitude and Practice*

- a. In 12:9-21, Paul emphasized loving right and hating evil three times (12:9, 17, 21). In view of God's mercy, His children should be loving and merciful to others. The verses consist of a long string of imperatives, ranging from honoring others above yourselves to practicing hospitality to living in peace with everyone and refusing to take revenge. Verse 12 stands out as the one verse that does not have our attitude toward others as the subject: "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." And yet all three exhortations are undoubtedly important in maintaining loving service to other fallen human beings. Paul lived in the real world and knew how challenging serving others can be.
- b. Anglican writer C.S. Lewis knew the importance of the way we treat others. He encouraged us to remember that every human is an immortal soul, writing, "It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare...It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities [faith in Christ and eternal glory or rejection of Christ and eternal judgment]... that we should conduct all our dealings with one another... There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal."<sup>x</sup>

- ii. Submitting to Authority – 13:1-14: At the beginning of chapter 13, Paul switched to the subject of a believer’s obligations to civil authorities.
1. Paul introduced these verses by saying human government is a divine ordinance and God has given rulers authority to punish crime and encourage good behavior. Believers are told to pay taxes and give due honor and obedience to those who govern them.
  2. At the time when Paul wrote Romans, Christianity was still mostly regarded by Rome as an off-shoot of Judaism, a legalized religion. Nevertheless, Paul wrote as he does having already experienced legal trouble as a result of his faith (Acts 16:19, 17:5-9, 19:28-41). Some years later, Peter affirmed Paul’s sentiments, writing that believers should subject themselves to human institutions, even though they might suffer as Christians at the hand of these same authorities (1 Peter 2:13, 4:15).
  3. Paul did not answer the question about how to respond when rulers or governments usurp or overrule God’s divine law. When Peter and the other apostles confronted that kind of situation, they replied, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Summarizing the subject, F.F. Bruce has written, “Christians will voice their ‘No’ to Caesar’s unauthorized demands the more effectively if they have shown themselves ready to say ‘Yes’ to all his authorized demands.”<sup>xi</sup> Since God has ordained governing authorities, our submission to them is an act of trust in Him.
  4. Having just mentioned the subject of paying owed taxes, revenue, respect, and honor, Paul said the believer should leave no debt outstanding, except the debt of love to one another. Love is the fulfillment of God’s law.
  5. With regard to believers’ obligations, Paul said we should wake up and understand that we have an opportunity in the present that we will not later have. We should behave decently and clothe ourselves with Christ-likeness, rather than gratifying our sin nature. If we fail to love others as He has loved us, we will be ashamed when we stand in His presence.
- iii. Not Passing Judgment on Disputable Matters – 14:1-15:12
1. In a final, long passage concerning believers’ obligations in view of God’s mercy, Paul discussed honorable treatment of brothers and sisters with weaker consciences. These are not matters about which the Bible offers clear direction but things one believer can freely enjoy and another cannot enjoy with a clear conscience. Since diet was an area of special sensitivity for Jewish believers in Paul’s day, he uses the eating of certain meats to illustrate his point. In our day, comparable activities include alcohol consumption, money

spending habits, certain kinds of entertainment, and Sabbath activities, among other things.

2. In view of God's mercy, Paul said that we should not offend others. Christ was an example in that He did not please Himself in serving us but endured the insults (15:3). How can we love others while simultaneously prioritizing our preferences over theirs? To do this is actually to treat others with contempt, and God will judge us for it (14:10-11). Paul said we will be blessed if we keep our opinions about such things between God and ourselves (14:22).
3. Having just mentioned Christ's example, Paul wrote that the all Scripture is relevant for today. The encouragement it brings concerning our difficulties enables us to live in hope of a better time yet to come.
4. In verses 7-13 and in the context of hope, Paul again encouraged his Gentile and Jewish readers to lovingly accept one another. Before moving on to personal notes (46 verses worth!), he ended the main body of the letter with a prayer for the Romans: *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."* The human spirit is naturally selfish and prideful. We worry about what will happen if we show mercy and deference to others. Will they consider us weak? Will they take advantage of us? Paul prayed that his readers would *trust God* with these things and that as they did, God would fill them with joy and peace. In turn, God's joy and peace causes believers to overflow with hope.

**C. Paul's Concluding Remarks** – 15:14-16:27: Paul's concluding personal notes can be summarized as follows:

- i. Affirmation of Paul's Call to the Gentiles – 15:14-22
- ii. Paul's Intention of Coming to Rome and Request for Prayer – 15:23-33
- iii. Paul's Introduction of Phoebe (His Courier) and Personal Greetings to Various Individuals in Rome – 16:1-16
- iv. A Warning about Permitting Divisive Teachings in the Church – 16:17-20
- v. Greetings from Paul's Co-Workers – 16:21-24
- vi. Closing Benediction – 16:25-27

**Summary Statement:** Paul concluded that as recipients of God's mercy, we should show love, honor, and mercy to others.

**Principle:** *In view of God's mercy to us, we ought to demonstrate love, honor, and compassion to others.*

**Application:** Mercy is compassion in action. When we are actively compassionate to a person in great need, whether or not they receive it, they will notice. Do those in your church recognize you as a merciful person? Or are you a person who secretly rejoices in the failures of those you envy, jokes at another's expense, and publically criticizes those with whom you disagree? Mature believers forgive quickly, show pity and tenderness, and seek to restore those who stumble. What act of compassion will you show a fellow believer who needs mercy this week? We must also consider our treatment of those outside the church. How do you respond to people who cause you a great deal of pain and suffering? God demonstrated His love for us in this: while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

The 18<sup>th</sup>-century, slave-trader-turned-pastor John Newton wrote, "When the love of Christ rules our hearts, we can put on compassion... If you find this practice difficult, it is owing partly to the remaining depravity of your nature, and partly because you have had but a faint sense of His mercy. Pray for a more powerful manifestation of it, and you will do better; mercy will be your delight."<sup>xii</sup>

## Conclusion

Paul's overarching theme in Romans is the gospel. The gospel is the good news that God has shown mercy to all who believe (those who live under the New Covenant, as well as the Old). When Bible doctrines like these settle down deep in our hearts and we begin making decisions based upon them, it is a sure mark of our progress in spiritual maturity.

What does your level of compassion toward others reveal about your maturity and your reception of God's mercy? Might your view of God's mercy be too shallow? If so, will you embrace by faith the knowledge of His complete and permanent forgiveness and begin rejoicing in it today?

<sup>i</sup> Tozer, A.W. (1961). *The Knowledge of the Holy* (p. 96-97). Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, Inc.

<sup>ii</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*, p. 674ff. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Press, 1994.

<sup>iii</sup> Morris, Leon. (1988). *The Epistle to the Romans* (p. 358). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>iv</sup> Mounce, R. H. (1995). *Romans* (Vol. 27, p. 201). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>v</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*, p. 674ff. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Press, 1994.

<sup>vi</sup> Morris, Leon. (1988). *The Epistle to the Romans* (p. 389). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>vii</sup> Morris, Leon. (1988). *The Epistle to the Romans* (p. 352). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>viii</sup> Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*. Tyndale Reference Library (882–883). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>ix</sup> Bruce, F.F. (1963). *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (p. 226). London: Tyndale Press.

<sup>x</sup> Lewis, C.S. (1949, reprint 2001) *The Weight of Glory: And Other Addresses* (p. 45-46). San Francisco, HarperCollins.

<sup>xi</sup> Bruce, F.F. (1963). *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (p. 234). London: Tyndale Press.

<sup>xii</sup> Reinke, Tony (2015). *Newton on the Christian Life* (p. 133). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.