

Is Mercy Compatible With Justice?

<u>Hosea 12:6</u>: (KJV) Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.



MERCY or JUSTICE? We often see them as opposites. When someone does something particularly bad, we want justice in its harshest and most direct form to be there waiting for them. We tend to see justice as hard but righteous punishment reserved for those whom we feel deserve it. Mercy is perceived differently. Often when we think of being merciful, there is a sense of pity or compassion, because we want it applied to those whom we feel deserve "a break." The problem? Too often our thinking and actions regarding justice and mercy are based on our emotional reaction to the situation

at hand. Too often we misrepresent what justice really means and how mercy really works. The good news is that God has given us all of the necessary guidelines to not only define but to live with just thinking and a merciful response.

(1) Justice and mercy in opposition, Justice vs. Mercy, Todd Reinhardt

• Justice vs. Mercy. Justice is an acknowledgement of the law of cause and effect, while mercy is an attempt to negate it. In the short term, and to the unthinking disintegrated mind, mercy seems superior to justice. It's easy to cast justice as harsh and heartless and portray mercy as good and loving. However, over the long term, justice develops individuals with stronger character, greater self-reliance; and as a result, are happier with higher levels of self-esteem. These individuals are more productive, innovative and honorable. Over the long term, mercy undermines the growth and future capacities of individuals and nations by refuting the law of cause and effect, and the inextricable link between reality and justice.

Are these two concepts at odds? Does mercy undermine justice?

Not only do we believe mercy and justice are compatible, *we believe they are inseparable*. Further, we believe God has set all of this in order by virtue of His revealed plan.

- True justice cannot exist without a foundation of love.
- True justice is restorative and MUST have mercy to be complete.
- Mercy is the foundation for grace.





Let's take this apart. First, justice is the very foundation of HOW God works:

<u>Psalm 89:14</u>: (NASB) *Righteousness* (right, equity) *and justice* (literally means a verdict pronounced judicially) *are the foundation of Your throne; lovingkindness* (kindness, goodness) *and truth go before You.*

How does God work? Universal righteous judgment based on universal truth.

FOUR ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Justice forms the boundary in which God operates. Wisdom surveys the field for the best solution. Power accomplishes this. Love is the motive behind it all.

While this is HOW God works, the next text is WHO God is:

<u>1 John 4:7-8</u>: (NASB) ⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

God is love gets quoted often, but justice is the foundation of His throne. These must work together. God IS love, and He WORKS based on justice. There is not one God in the Old Testament and another in the New Testament. For more on this, please see podcast Episodes 779 and 783: "Does the Same God Rule in the Old and New Testament?" (Parts I and II).

Let's look at His plan as it unfolded:

<u>Genesis 1:26</u>: (NASB) Then God said, Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

Creating us in God's own image was an act of love.

Love is the foundation of creation, for it is the driving force that endows all that is created with an unmistakable harmony of purpose. Love gave birth to communication, adoration and the sacred music of discipleship. Love needs justice to flourish.

He created the ability for harmony, even though it does not look like it from all that is falling apart around us. We seem to be closer to anarchy than harmony - how can that be if *God is love*? More soon!

Creating us in His own image gave us the ability to communicate, to adore, to praise and to follow Jesus. Because of love, He "built in" our ability to choose, think, process and appreciate.

After Adam sinned, God implemented justice:

<u>Genesis 3:19</u>: (NASB) By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.



God's justice carried out His command but cost the lives of His precious creation. God is love, and He went through the trouble of creating man in His own image. But here His own justice would soon snuff man's life out. Does that make sense? We have to explore the details to understand better.

Observations so far about love and justice:

- Love provokes the creation, and not just any creation, but one in the Creator's own likeness, the human family.
- Justice puts that creation into an environment of necessary obedience to righteous commands. There are rules.
- Love explains all of the potential consequences. God outlined the consequences to Adam and Eve.
- Justice calls sin out and levies the consequences. God had full integrity because He followed through with what He said.

We said earlier that justice needs mercy. Was mercy a last-minute solution for a plan gone wrong?

Our whole context is based on the thinking that God is the ultimate model for justice and mercy. Too often people, Christians included, see God through the eyes of human imperfection. If we pay attention, the Bible tells us differently. We are about to see mercy, not as a last minute "Hail Mary" play, but rather as an integral piece of the whole plan of God.

"Send Jesus quick to fix this mess!" That is NOT how it works!



The point of justice is not only to engage consequences for a wrongdoing, but the deeper, long-term goal is to restore the one who did wrong so they can grow by it.

This is the kind of justice God had right from the start:

<u>1 John 4:9</u>: (NASB) By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten son into the world so that we might live through him.



Crime and restorative justice; Restorative Justice - Why Do We Need It, Brave New Films

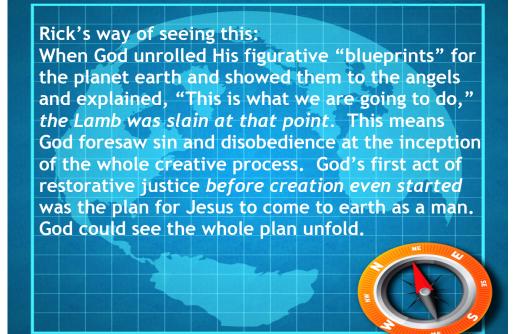
• More than half of victims of violent crime don't even call the police in the first place. They prefer nothing to everything we have to offer. The vast majority of crime survivors' pain goes unhealed. What the existence of restorative justice means is that we can no longer pretend we don't know what else to do. As a country we're really good at punishment. It's passive, it doesn't require people to act, think; it certainly doesn't require them to change. When we lock people up we excuse them from their responsibility to answer for what they've done. Restorative justice is a process to hold them accountable. It's a tool.

God's first act of <u>justice-based mercy</u> on behalf of humanity was long before humanity even existed:

<u>Revelation 13:8</u>: (KJV) And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb (Jesus) slain from the *foundation <2602>* of the *world <2889>*.

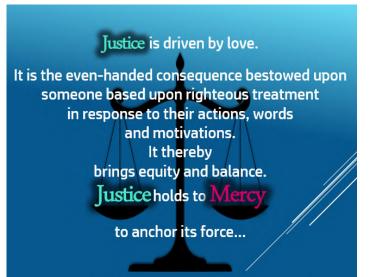
Foundation: Strongs #2602, katabole, a deposition, i.e. founding; figuratively, conception

World: Strongs #2889, kosmos, orderly arrangement, i.e. decoration; by implication, the world (in a wide or narrow sense, including its inhabitants, literally or figuratively [morally])

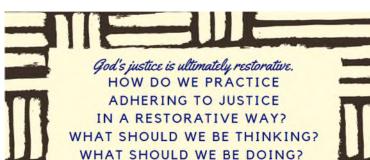


What wisdom of the heavenly Father to want to teach His creation by teaching an eternal lesson. He allowed sin but put restorative justice in place before anything went wrong! That is the model of justice and mercy we have before us.





Justice has great force; mercy makes that force more valuable.



<u>1 Peter 4:17</u>: (NASB) For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God...

Followers of Christ are accountable now in advance of the world for their words and actions. When dealing with the brotherhood we should see them spiritually instead of fleshly. We should help build them up, helping them develop Christlike qualities. Because we all sin

and make mistakes, we should give each other the benefit of the doubt where reasonable. If the mistake needs to be addressed, we should go to them humbly and alone. Talk with them. Explain that you are there to help get them back on course, showing mercy. <u>Matthew 18:15-17</u>

Mercy in the Old Testament:

<u>Micah 6:8</u>: (KJV) He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy <2617>, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Kindness/Mercy: Strongs #2617, goodness, kindness, faithfulness



Love means being good, kind and faithful to those around us.

Comment from Trish: It seems we have forgotten what the word "father" means. Our heavenly Father has planned everything out like a good parent. If we are a good parent, we look to the future and do things not just for immediate satisfaction.

A father will embark on restorative justice for his children, pronouncing justice and judgment in a way the kids can learn in the long term. God's justice is both merciful and restorative.



New Testament:

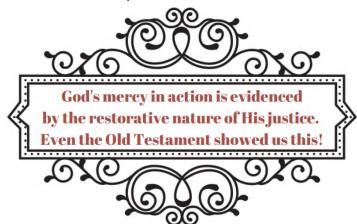
<u>Matthew 5:7</u>: (NRSV) Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Kindness/Mercy: Strongs #1653, compassionate (by word or deed, specifically, by divine grace): have compassion (pity on), have (obtain, receive, shew) mercy (on)

God's mercy expressed:

<u>Psalms 36:5-7,10-11</u>: (NASB) ⁵Your lovingkindness <2617> (same Hebrew word for kindness and mercy), O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness reaches to the skies. ⁶Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep. O LORD, You preserve man and beast. ⁷How precious is Your lovingkindness <2617>, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings... ¹⁰O continue Your lovingkindness <2617> to those who know You, and Your righteousness to the upright in heart. ¹¹Let not the foot of pride come upon me, and let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.

God's mercy surrounds the earth. It protects the feeble and is reachable as long as we do not allow our own pride or another's wickedness to interfere.



When we look at the mercy of God, we cannot look at it outside of the value of the restorative justice He put in place long before Adam was created.

How do we personally apply the combination of justice and mercy God has exampled for us?

To even attempt acting in a godly manner in a world such as ours can be utterly scary. This world has traded in true justice and exchanged it for personal preferences and politics. Mercy, therefore, is based on feelings and associations and ends up being nothing more than an extension of emotion.

We need to find our footing. Israel had the same problems:

<u>Hosea 6:4-6</u>: (KJV) ⁴O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. ⁵Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth.

Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away - In other words, your goodness is abundant until the sun comes up and burns it off. For the whole day you have nothing. God was telling them they will have to do better!



Yes, in the Old Testament they had to live by physical sacrifices and the Law, but here is what God was looking for:

⁶For I desired **mercy <2617>**, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

In the Old Testament, God told Israel He wanted *mercy and compassion*, not sacrifices. But He made them make the sacrifices! God's justice sent punishment for their wrongdoing, which was an act of mercy. He told them they needed to see service to Him in a personal way, and not just in a "fulfilling required tasks" way.

A good example of this is raising kids. If they did something wrong and we tell them what to do to make it right, often they do it with a begrudging attitude, ritually getting it over with so they can do what they want. As a parent, we are looking for a cheerful attitude.



When my son, Tim, was a little boy, he stole some of his buddy's pencils and broke them. We sat down and had a talk. He was to earn the money to replace the pencils. He was begrudging at first, but his attitude started to change, because I kept telling him he would be able to give his friend something back that was brand new. He started to get excited. When we went to the store, he found the coolest pencils he could find. When we delivered those pencils to his friend, my little boy was so happy to say, "Here! I broke your other ones, but these are brand new and they are for you!" The little boy's mother was flabbergasted! This was restorative. Tim started doing this because he had to but ended up doing it because he wanted to.

(1) Virtue declines with no justice and just mercy, Justice vs. Mercy, Todd Reinhardt

• The virtuous aspects of character, as well as the fortitude of the mind, will decline in atrophy if the justice of reality is dodged in favor of mercy. Justice allows for mistakes if those mistakes are honestly accounted for and corrected, while honoring natural growth of character and skills. It does not honor laziness, refusal to grow, irresponsibility, dishonesty or the dastardly misuse of the mind to avoid, re-create or evade reality. But if properly applied, mercy does. The mental processes that rationalize mercy subordinate rational thought and long-range thinking to feelings, wishes and whims.

We believe he is talking about a misapplication of mercy. Mercy should not be an extension of your emotions, but he seems to be lumping all mercy into that category. Mercy makes justice restorative and complete if done God's way.





How do we equip ourselves to apply true justice-based mercy rather than emotion-based mercy?

<u>Proverbs 16:6</u>: (KJV) By mercy <2617> and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear (meaning reverence) of the LORD men depart from evil.

Some misrepresent God. Hellfire is a concept used to get people to be afraid of God. This does not drive people towards righteousness; they act in a way just to protect themselves. Reverence for God and knowing His character brings people away from evil.

<u>Proverbs 3:3</u>: (KJV) Let not mercy <2617> and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart.



We can go out and buy a bling gold necklace with "mercy and truth" written in stud diamonds. (We are kidding.) Keeping Jesus close. He lived mercy and truth, so we need to be reminded over and over again what that looked like and how he reacted. We should live following Jesus. No bling needed!

The following is a great barometer for pinpointing the motivation of our justice and mercy:

<u>Matthew 22:36-40</u>: (NRSV) ³⁶Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest? ³⁷He said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment.

Jesus gave a straightforward answer: Love God in every way. This will lift our standards of judgment to a higher basis than we alone can see. If we know Jesus, we are obligated to raise that standard. He showed us the character of God in his imitation of God and the following of God's will and God's way.

³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Because we love God first and foremost, loving our neighbor as ourselves propels us into a justice-based approach to mercy, because we can now see through the eyes of their best long-term interests.

(I))It's about "doing" sorry, not feeling it, *Restorative Justice - Why Do We Need It*, Brave New Films

> • People take turns answering questions like what happened, what needs arise, whose responsibility is it to meet those needs, and how is that person going to do it? It requires someone to take responsibility, to repair things as much as possible, and to never commit that crime again. This isn't about feeling sorry. It's about doing sorry. Things like: go to school, get a job, pay restitution, apologize, do community service. Restorative justice practices have been used to address low-level infractions like vandalism up to addressing the impact of murders on the surviving family members.



In other words, we should do what we can to show our sorrow for the hurt we created. By becoming viable and contributory, we can begin to restore order to the circumstances.



Grace now enters the picture. If we get the grace connection it will all begin to gel.

We have godly justice and mercy, and now there is grace. Aren't mercy and grace the same?

Bringing grace into the mix is necessary and enlightening as well. We will find that grace completes the circle of influence we began with:

Love provoked creation. Justice supports and enhances love. Mercy completes justice. Grace expands mercy and is defined by love.





"Is mercy compatible with justice?"

Albert said: Mercy should not be automatic but available to those who show remorse.

Oliver said: No, it is manifestly unjust. Mercy is unearned forgiveness, which is to excuse the injustice for no reason at all.

This is not God's restorative justice which has mercy built in.

Michael said: Yes, but for justice to mean anything, there must first be sorrow.

Mercy and grace compared:



(\neg, γ) Jewish and Christian views and results, Justice vs. Mercy, Todd Reinhardt

• The Jewish religion is closer to rational morality than the Christian religion. The Jewish tradition is based on a rudimentary moral construct, where their moral tenets hang on the fundamental concept of justice. In the Christian tradition, their rudimentary moral construct is such that their fundamental moral tenets hang on the concept of mercy. This explains why over thousands of years certain differences have emerged between the two societies. The Jewish culture has greater stability, productivity and innovation. It's populated with happier, healthier people who are more accepting of the concept of personal responsibility. By extension, this reveals why they're so hated by unstable, unproductive people in societies. Therefore, it can be understood that in spite of all words, actions and attitudes to the contrary, hatred for the Jews is generally rooted in childish envy.

In some cases, we believe the way Christianity in general examines Scripture is not the way it was intended. Mercy, in relation to true Christianity according to scriptural principles, is different than what this speaker is describing. It is not loose or thoughtless.

Grace in action:

"The Golden Rule"- one of the most simple and profound sayings ever uttered at any time anywhere.

<u>Matthew 7:12</u>: (NASB) In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.



Jesus credits the Old Testament for the ingredients that make up this saying. Some say he was merely copying other ancient wisdom found elsewhere...was he? (For more details, see the Bonus Material and Episode #878 "The Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule - Why Bother"?)

Mercy in action:

- **The HINDU religion teaches**: This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain. (The Mahabharata)
- **The BUDDHIST religion teaches:** Hurt not others with that which pains yourself. (Udana-Varga)
- **The BAHA'I faith teaches:** He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfil. (The Book of Certitude)

All three of these speak from the negative - do not inflict pain on someone else because you would not want them to inflict pain on you. Jesus says it in a positive way - treat people carefully, wisely, benevolently and with mercy. Spread grace wherever you go. This is more powerful and profound.

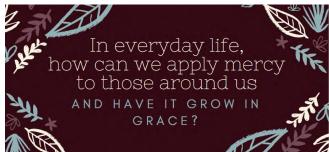
We must learn to have our mercy lead to grace - just as God's example shows us:

Ephesians 2:4-10: (KJV) ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

God, who is rich in mercy - we already saw this was in place from the foundation of the world. He would give an unmerited gift through grace to those who follow His son, Jesus. God's mercy brought us grace.

Jesus was the price for justice to be paid and the end result is grace that prevails for eternity:

⁷That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.



We all get scam phone calls. I now look forward to them, because these people are calling to steal from you. We all know it. When the person says, "I represent Microsoft. Your computer is in rough shape and we need to look right no literally say, "Really. You and I both know

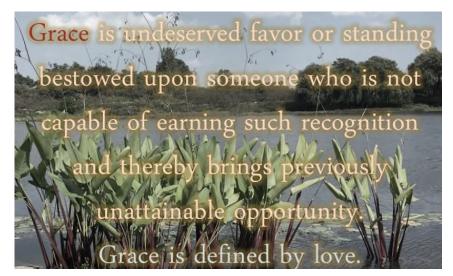


in rough shape and we need to look right now," I literally say, "Really. You and I both know you are looking to steal and that is just wrong. I want you to

know God sees what you are doing. Not only does He see it, but there is a Day of Judgment coming where you are going to have to make good for the wrong you do. My advice to you is to start mending your ways right now, because later it will be much harder. You will not get away with this." The funny thing



is they listen until I ask, "Do you understand?" Then they get mad at me, swear and hang up. Maybe it planted a seed of God's mercy and grace.



(1)) Meeting the needs of the hurt, *Restorative Justice - Why Do We Need It*, Brave New Films

> • Restorative justice processes are first and foremost about meeting the needs of people who are hurt. Sometimes the person who can make the greatest contribution to a survivor's healing is the person who hurt them. To come through trauma we need answers to our questions; to say, "My life was never the same after you hurt me like that." Crime survivors want the most safety possibly available. So, if incarceration actually produced safety we would have the safest country in human history. That's not what we have.

<u>Colossians 3:12-15</u>: (NASB) ¹²So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.





How do we avoid putting simple convenience over spiritual conscience application of justice and mercy?

As with anything that requires making our own feelings secondary, focusing on applying justice and mercy *in a godly fashion* is challenging. The subtlety of this endeavor is in the fact that we are SO good at rationalizing our comfortable thinking into actions we might think are unbiased.

Justice-based mercy must have a different source than we are likely comfortable with:

Luke 6:35-36: (NASB) ³⁵But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

The mercy of God is the restorative part of justice. It is part of God's justice; it is not the last ditch effort pass at the end of a game. He put a plan in place with lasting eternal power.

Love your enemies...do good...lend, expecting nothing in return...be kind to ungrateful and evil men. These are hard things to do! It is not comfortable to love our enemies. When someone wrongs you or those you care about, it is a struggle. These actions are all clear challenges to our personal biases.

Long after the Hosea text where God was showing Israel to follow Him with their hearts, Jesus needed to remind the Pharisees of the same thing. Nothing changes unless something changes:

<u>Matthew 9:10-13</u>: (NASB) ¹⁰Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners? ¹²But when Jesus heard this, he said, It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: I desire compassion, and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

These people "from the wrong side of the tracks" needed his compassion and mercy. Why were the Pharisees not helping them in this way?

But go and learn what this means: I desire compassion, and not sacrifice quoting from <u>Hosea 6:6</u>. "Remember this, Pharisees? Maybe you should be looking in the mirror...you are spiritually and emotionally sick, so you should be paying attention."

Justice-based mercy means understanding that God sees hearts as well as actions. Jesus understood their hearts were wrong. They were meticulously doing the specific things of the Law while avoiding the people who needed their help.

God gives us actions to prod our hearts toward Him, and those actions are NOT just busywork.

(1))The current system fails, *Restorative Justice - Why Do We Need It*, Brave New Films



The core drivers of violence are shame, isolation, an inability to meet one's economic needs, an exposure to violence - and we bake those into prisons to try and keep people from committing further violence. Incarceration exposes people to exactly the things that increase the likelihood that they'll go on to harm others. People who are hurt deserve a process that will help them heal. People who are responsible for crime have an obligation to be accountable for that. All of us deserve responses to crime that actually make us safer. Our current criminal justice system doesn't deliver any of those and restorative justice at its best delivers them all.



If we are not doing it for the right reasons, should we do it at all?



This made me think of a wonderful sister from our Bible study. She has shared that at times she is so tired in her Christian walk that her heart is not into sacrificing for others. But, she goes through the motions anyway even though she is exhausted. She does it because it is the right thing to do. I love that about her. The effect she has on others is huge. Everyone knows the difficult experience she has gone through, but to see her faithfulness gives everyone else strength.

Be a good Christian and then you will feel like it!

<u>1 Peter 2:9-10</u>: (NASB) ⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

We are chosen, royal, owned of God, recipients of mercy. All of these things outline our *responsibility* to justice-based mercy. We owe it to God; He owns us. We are chosen for a role beyond our comprehension. This is what it means to live by grace, even when you do not feel like it.

<u>James 2:8-13</u>: (NASB) ⁸If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well. ⁹But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

Fulfilling the royal law - This Law of Love elevates us beyond the Mosaic Law. This is the law given to the followers of Christ. Love God and your neighbor - a royal law for the royal priesthood.

¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. ¹¹For He who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not commit murder. Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹²So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.



Mercy triumphs over judgment - mercy is the final piece of justice, which brings us to grace and the expression of God's love.



We have to hold ourselves to the highest accountability of justice, but have mercy when it comes to those around us.

So, is mercy compatible with justice? For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions... Think about it...!

And now <u>even more</u> to think about... only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!



Join us next week for our podcast on May 7, 2018: Do My Doubts Mean I Do Not Have Faith?

Bonus Material!

Truth stands, even if there be no public support. It is self-sustained. – Mahatma Gandhi The essence of justice is mercy. – Edwin Hubbel Chapin A God all mercy is a God unjust. – Edward Young



Mercy is above this sceptered sway, it is enthroned in the hearts of kings, it is an attribute to God himself; And earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice.

– William Shakespeare

<u>Matthew 7:12</u>: (NASB) In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Jesus credits the Old Testament for the ingredients that make up this saying. Some say that Jesus was merely copying other ancient wisdom found elsewhere - was he?

Comparisons from ccel.org:

The HINDU religion taught: This is the sum of duty: Do naught to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain. (The Mahabharata)

• There is no better way to target fulfilling the Golden Rule than by putting God first.

The BUDDHIST religion taught: Hurt not others with that which pains yourself. (Udana-Varga)

• The Golden Rule - Honor God's name and character as we want our name and character to be honored.

<u>The BAHA'l faith teaches</u>: He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfil. (The Book of Certitude)

• The Golden Rule - Respect all that your neighbor is and has as their own so they can do the same.

<u>Other Sources:</u> Do not do unto others what angers you if done to you by others. (Isocrates 436-338 BCE)

• The Golden Rule - Honor the sacredness of human life and commitments and you, too, can be honored.

Tzu-kung asked, "Is there a single word which can be a guide to conduct throughout one's life?" The Master said, "It is perhaps the word "shu." Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire." (Analects, 15.24)

• What is the difference between the Golden Rule spoken by Jesus and all of the other versions cited? All other versions spoke of what we should not do; Jesus spoke of what we should do.

A bit more mercy commentary from the Scriptures:

Israel's command towards mercy:

<u>Zechariah 7:8-14</u>: (NASB) ⁸Then the word of the LORD came to Zechariah saying, ⁹Thus has the LORD of hosts said, Dispense true justice and practice kindness <2617> and compassion each to his brother; ¹⁰and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. ¹¹But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing. ¹²They made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts. ¹³And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen, says the LORD of hosts; ¹⁴but I scattered them with a storm wind among all the nations whom



they have not known. Thus the land is desolated behind them so that no one went back and forth, for they made the pleasant land desolate.

Israel was compelled to live mercifully on a regular basis:

<u>Romans 9:14-18</u>: (NASB) ¹⁴What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! ¹⁵For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

God is not compelled to show all mercy in all circumstances, yet here He does show His willingness:

¹⁶So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. ¹⁸So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

How did God harden Pharaoh? He did it by showing him unmistakable miracles on behalf of Moses and His people. Pharaoh chose to ignore them and thereby became an example for the ages. So, essentially, it was God's mercy (witnessed by Pharaoh, though not meant for Pharaoh) that hardened Pharaoh.

What about Christians?

James 2:8-13: (NASB) ⁸If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well. ⁹But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. ¹¹For He who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not commit murder. Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹²So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. ¹³For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

We have received magnificent mercy. We live under liberty, which encourages mercy. We are obligated to extend mercy. Do all these things and triumph over judgment!

<u>James 1:22</u>: (NIV) Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.