GOD’S MERCY, LONGSUFFERING, PATIENCE AND SYMPATHY

Described

God’s mercy refers to His tender compassion, pity and amazing kindness manifested towards undeserving humans in great need or in miserable suffering and affliction. God’s mercy is His total giving of Himself to help fallen suffering humans.

God’s longsuffering is defined as His amazing slowness to punish sinners. His longsuffering is His merciful delaying of the time His anger against sinners will manifest itself in earthly or eternal punishment.

God’s patience refers to how God calmly waits for lengthy periods for people to turn from their sins and unbelief in Him.

God’s sympathy refers to God in one sense suffering when we suffer and to Him having deep compassionate feeling for us when He sees the problems we face.

Key Hebrew words for God’s mercy

One Old Testament Hebrew word for mercy is “raham”. “Raham” is defined as “love, have compassion” (Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 933). Harris, Archer and Waltke define “raham” as “love deeply, have mercy, be compassionate…deep love (usually of a ‘superior’ for an ‘inferior’)” (page 841). 1 Isaiah 49:15 uses “raham” for the deep love a good mother has for the child of her womb: “Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the child of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.”

The plural Hebrew word “rahamim” means “tender mercy, compassion” (Harris, Archer and Waltke, page 842) or “compassion” (Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 933). 2 Psalm 79:8-9 declares: “Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us! Let Your tender mercies come speedily to meet us, for we have been brought very low. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; and deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, for Your name’s sake!” Psalm 145:9 says: “The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.” Note in reference to God in the New King James and King James Versions, Psalm 51:1 and 69:16 speak of “the multitude of Your tender mercies.” This shows He does not have only a small amount of mercy in His character. He is exceptionally merciful. Harris, Archer and Waltke say the word “rahamim” “shows the link between ‘raham’, to have compassion and ‘rehem/raham’, ‘womb’, for ‘rahamim’ can refer to the seat of one’s emotions (Genesis 43:30) or the expression of one’s deep emotion (1 Kings 3:26)…”Rahamim’ recalls in various

situations that God’s tender mercy is rooted in *His free love* and grace” (pages 842-843). It can be argued “rahamim” when used about God, compares His tender mercy towards His children to the tender compassion or mercy a mother shows to her baby or her womb expresses to her unborn foetus.

A Hebrew word derived from the word “raham” is the adjective (describing word) “rahum”. Brown, Driver and Briggs defines “rahum” as “compassionate; – always of God” (page 933). 2 Chronicles 30:9 translates “raham” as “merciful” in the New King James Version: “For if you return to the Lord, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him.”

**The remarkable Hebrew word “hesed”**

The original Hebrew Old Testament uses a wonderful word called “hesed” which describes major features of God’s character as expressed in His relations with humans. Vine says “hesed” means “loving kindness, steadfast love, grace, mercy, faithfulness, goodness and devotion” (page 142). Holladay defines “hesed” as meaning “loyalty, faithfulness, kindness, grace” (page 111).

Brown, Driver and Briggs define “hesed” as “(God’s) kindness or loving kindness in condescending to the needs of His creatures. (It means) specifically lovingkindness in redemption from enemies and troubles, preservation of life from death, quickening of spiritual life, redemption from sin and keeping (His) covenants; mercies, deeds of kindness” (page 339). The word “condescending” in this definition means “to reach down from a level of superiority to someone who is inferior”. The word “quickening” in the above means “to make alive, impart life or revive”. The quickening of spiritual life through God’s lovingkindness is spoken of in Psalm 119:88.

In 1927, Nelson Glueck published his “Hesed in the Bible” in which he argued God’s “hesed” was not mercy but was merely His *loyalty or faithfulness* to His covenant obligations to His people. In many contexts, “hesed” includes the meaning of God’s faithfulness to His covenants. But it is wrong to limit “hesed” just to this one meaning. In a critical analysis of Glueck’s ideas, Harris, Archer and Waltke said, “It does not follow that God’s love is merely a factor in a covenant; rather the covenant is the sign and expression of his love…That ‘hesed’ refers only to this covenant and not to the eternal divine kindness back of it, however, is a fallacious assumption” (page 306). Read the rest of Harris, Archer and Waltke’s comprehensive comments on the false claim that “hesed” is merely God’s faithfulness or loyalty to His covenants (pages 305-307). Observe also “hesed” is used in relation to the undeserved kindnesses shown by Ruth to Boaz (see Ruth 3:10), the prostitute Rahab to the spies (see Joshua 2:12) and King Abimelech to Abraham (see Genesis 21:23). Ruth and Boaz, Rahab and the spies and Abimelech and Abraham. Note that none of these people had covenants between themselves when these unmerited kindnesses were done.

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3 The adjective “rahum” is used in Exodus 34:6, Deuteronomy 4:31, 2 Chronicles 30:9, Nehemiah 9:17, 9:31, Joel 2:13 and Jonah 4:2.
Psalm 103:17 teaches God has had mercy or lovingkindness (or “hesed” in Hebrew) as a part of His nature from the eternal past to the eternal future: “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him…” 4

In Psalm 136, the Psalm-writer teaches the eternal nature of God’s mercy when he constantly repeats the expression “for His mercy endures forever”. In Hebrew, the word “mercy” here is “hesed”. Also note the word “endures” is not in the original Hebrew. So it really reads “for His mercy forever”.

Because God is love (see 1 John 4:8 and 16), this means He was eternally loving before He planned any of His covenants with humans.

God’s covenants are results or expressions of His “hesed”

To varying degrees, all God’s covenants are results and expressions of His eternal “hesed” or kindness and mercy. God’s eternally loving, gracious and merciful nature and character planned various covenants or bonds with humans. The word “hesed” is used in relation to God’s covenant in Deuteronomy 7:9, 1 Kings 8:23, Psalm 106:45 and Daniel 9:4. But this is different from limiting the definition of “hesed” to God’s faithfulness or loyalty to His covenants.

Not just because of His honesty or faithfulness

Under the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and New Covenants, God made various promises. But God does not fulfil His promises related to these covenants just because of His honesty or faithfulness. He originally made each of these specific covenants because of His perfect love, grace and mercy towards humans.

It is true that under the New Covenant, God is committed to us as believers in terms of Him never lying and always being faithful to His covenant promises. But His commitment to us is far deeper than this. This is because His devotion to us is founded on His eternal lovingkindness towards us.

God’s lovingkindness is compared sometimes in the Bible to the love of a devoted, totally faithful husband for his wife. Hosea 2:19-20 states: “I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness…” Marriage involves a legal covenant between two people. But at a deeper level, a good marriage is based on deep love for another person. Ephesians 5:25 relates to this: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”

God delights in showing His “hesed” to people

Micah 7:18-19 demonstrates God has enormous delight in expressing His “hesed” or mercy to sinful humans: “Who is God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in...”

4 Note in the original Hebrew of the above verse, the word “everlasting” is “olam”. In Deuteronomy 32:7, Job 22:15, Isaiah 61:4, Micah 7:14 and Malachi 3:4, the word “olam” refers just to the distant past, but not the eternal past. But in Genesis 21:33, it is used in relation to God’s eternal nature. In this verse, the Lord is called “the Everlasting God”.


mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea”. Do you believe what David said about God’s mercy or “hesed” in Psalm 23:6?: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life…”

Other important Old Testament usages of “hesed”

There are many key Old Testament verses in which the Hebrew word “hesed” is used. This emphasis on God’s love, kindness, mercy and faithful devotion to His people is seen when the expression “His mercy (hesed) endures forever” is repeated five times in Psalm 118 and 26 times in Psalm 136 and is mentioned once each in 1 Chronicles 16:34, 16:41, 2 Chronicles 5:13, 7:3, 7:6, 20:21, Psalm 106:1, 107:1 and Jeremiah 33:11. The Holy Spirit inspired these Biblical writers to repeat this wonderful revelation about God’s “hesed”.

In Psalm 51:1, David reveals that God forgives disobedience to His commands on the basis on His lovingkindness or mercy: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.” In this verse, David uses the word “hesed” and two other associated Hebrew words for “mercy” – “hanan” and “racham” in relation to God’s forgiveness of his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband.

In Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 103:8, 106:7, 106:45, Isaiah 63:7 and Jonah 4:2, we see there is not a limited supply of God’s mercies or undeserved lovingkindnesses, but an abundance or multitude of them. This is similar to the New Testament revelation of the abundance of God’s grace through Jesus Christ (see Romans 5:17, 2 Corinthians 4:15 and 8:7) or exceeding riches of His grace (see Ephesians 2:7).

In Isaiah 54:10, God promises to never remove His “hesed” or “kindness” from His people. In Psalm 52:8, David said he would trust in God’s mercy or “hesed” forever: “…I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.” We must trust in God’s mercy or lovingkindness every day of our lives and after death also.

God is our lovingkindness

All believers understand to some degree that God has shown them lovingkindness or grace. But fewer believers realise God is the epitome or perfect expression of lovingkindness. This is why in Psalm 144:1-2, David said God is “my lovingkindness”: “Blessed be the Lord my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle – my lovingkindness and my fortress…” Do you believe God is your lovingkindness – the One Who is full of kindness and mercy towards you?

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Daniel turned from sin by God’s love, mercy and grace

A wonderful example of turning from sin to God based on His grace, mercy and lovingkindness is seen in Daniel 9:4-19. In these verses, Daniel confessed his sins and those of the people of Israel. He used various words to describe these evils: “sinned” (verses 5 and 8), “sins” (verse 16), “iniquity” (verse 5), “iniquities” (verse 16), “done wickedly” (verse 5), “rebelled” (verse 5), “unfaithfulness” (verse 7) and “transgressed” (verse 11). These words reveal the great depth of evil Daniel was confessing. Daniel was not here only confessing sins. Verse 13 speaks of him also turning from sin. Daniel was not here being converted, but was turning from known individual sins. He could not turn from sin for other Israelites. But as a prophet and intercessor, he was confessing the sins of others and seeking God’s mercy, grace and forgiveness for the nation as a whole.

In verses 7 and 14, Daniel emphasises how righteous or just God is. Then in verses 11 and 13, Daniel speaks of how the people of Israel were judged by God on the basis of the just demands of the Law of Moses. Verse 11 stresses the people of Israel had been judged with the curses found in the Law of Moses (see Leviticus 26:14-39 and Deuteronomy 28:15-68). In verse 16, Daniel declares how angry God was with the people of Israel because of their turning away from Him to sin.

But note Daniel also emphasised how mercifull, gracious and loving God was. In verse 4, Daniel speaks of God’s “mercy” or lovingkindness or “hesed” in Hebrew. In verse 9, Daniel shows how “mercy” or in Hebrew “racham” and associated forgiveness of sin are a normal remarkable part of God’s character. Further proof Daniel was praying to God on the basis of God’s grace and not his or other Israelites’ obedience to the Mosaic Law, can also be seen in verse 18 when Daniel said, “…for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds but because of Your great mercies.”

Greek words for God’s mercy

There are a number of words used in the original Greek New Testament which relate to God’s wonderful mercy. The main ones of these are “eleos”, “eleeo”, “oikirmos”, “oikteiro” and “oiktirmon”. Bauer says “eleos” means “mercy, compassion, pity…” (page 250). 6 “Eleeo” means “to show kindness or concern for someone in serious need” (Louw and Nida, page 751).7 “Oikirmos” means “to show mercy and concern, with the implication of sensitivity and compassion” (Louw and Nida, page 751) or “pity, compassion for the ills of others” (Vine, page 404). 8 The Greek verb “oikteiro” and adjective “oiktirmon” are derived from the above word “oiktirmos” and have similar meanings to it. 9

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6 “Eleos” or forms of it are used in verses such as Luke 1:58, 1:72, 1:78, Romans 15:9, Ephesians 2:4, 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:2, Titus 1:4, 3:5, Hebrews 4:16, James 3:17, 1 Peter 1:3, 2 John 3 and Jude 21.
8 A form of the word “oikirmos” is used in Romans 12:1 and 2 Corinthians 1:3.
9 A form of the word “oikteiro” is used in the latter part of Romans 9:15. “Oiktirmon” is used in James 5:11. “Oiktirmon” and a form of it are used in Luke 6:36. James 5:11 states: “…the Lord is…merciful.”
Relevant Hebrew words for God’s longsuffering and forbearance

In the Old Testament, the word “longsuffering” is the English translation of the two Hebrew words “arek” and “aph.” The word “arek” means “long” (Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 74). “Arek” is derived from the Hebrew word “arak” meaning “be long, prolong” (Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 73). The word “aph” means “anger” (Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 60). So the combination of “arek” and “aph” means slow to anger or deferring anger or prolonging the time before anger manifests itself in punishments. These two Hebrew words occur together in Exodus 34:6, Numbers 14:18, Psalm 86:15 and Jeremiah 15:15.

Many Christians wrongly believe the Mosaic Covenant taught God is quick to become very angry and to punish sin. But note Exodus 34:6 and Numbers 14:18 are similar revelations given in the Mosaic Covenant. Numbers 14:18 states: The Lord is longsuffering…” The words “arek” and “aph” are also used in Isaiah 48:9 and are translated as “defer anger”: “For My name’s sake I will defer My anger…”

Genesis 15:16, 18-20 and Deuteronomy 9:4-6 taken together reveal God took 400 years before His anger against the sins of the Amorites became great enough for Him to punish them. The sins of the Amorites involved wicked human sacrifice of children and others, many forms of sexual perversion, witchcraft, pagan idolatry, murder and so on (see Leviticus 18:1-30, 20:1-23 and Deuteronomy 18:9-14).

The word “forbear” is “mashak” in the original Hebrew of Nehemiah 9:30: “Yet many years didst thou forbear them…” (K.J.V). “Mashak” here means “to draw out, prolong, continue” (Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 604). “Mashak” is used in Nehemiah 9:30 in the sense of God drawing out or prolonging His kindness to sinful unrepentant Israelites as an act of patience by Him. “Mashak” is used in Psalm 36:10 in a similar sense.

Relevant Greek words for God’s patience, long-suffering and forbearance

The Greek word for “patience” is “hupomone” (Vine, page 462). Bauer defines “hupomone” as “patience…perservence” (page 84). A form of the word “hupomone” is used in relation to God in Romans 15:5. This verse describes God as “the God of patience”. This expression emphasises how patience is a crucial feature of God’s wonderful character. God patiently perseveres with unbelievers for long periods of time despite the evil in their lives.

Considering God is so patient, it is little wonder the Scriptures constantly stress He is slow to anger (see Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 103:8, Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2 and Nahum 1:3). The expression “slow to anger” does not mean God takes a long time before He becomes angry with sinful unbelievers. “Slow to anger” refers to being slow to outwardly manifest His anger in punishments. Refer to my previous comments on the Hebrew expression “arek aph” meaning longsuffering.

Psalm 7:11 shows God is angry with unrepentant unbelievers and their sin every day: “God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.” In the original Hebrew, the word “angry” here is “zoam” which means “experiencing intense anger” (Harris, Archer and Waltke, page 247). John 3:36 reveals God is angry with every person who is at present rejecting Jesus Christ: “…he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Because unlike humans God is infinite, He can perfectly love unrepentant unbelievers
and be full of peace (see Philippians 4:7, 1 Thessalonians 15:23 and Hebrews 13:20) while at the same time being angry with them. This is exceptionally difficult for humans to understand.

The Greek words for God’s longsuffering are “makrothumia” and “makrothumeo” (Vine, page 377). “Makrothumia” means “slowness of avenging injuries, long-suffering, forebearance” (Perschbacher, page 263) and “forebearance, patience towards others” (Bauer, page 488). It comes from the two Greek words “makros” meaning “long” and “thumos” meaning “temper” or “hot anger” (Vine, pages 377 and 688). Therefore, God is long-tempered, not short-tempered.

Vine says, “Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is…associated with mercy and is used of God” (page 377).

The word “makrothumia” or forms of it are used in Romans 2:4, 9:22, 1 Peter 3:20 and 2 Peter 3:15. In Romans 9:22, God reveals He is very longsuffering even with those He knew would one day feel the full force of His anger against evil: “What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.”

Romans 2:4 shows the reason why God is longsuffering and slow to express His anger against sinners: “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance.”

God is perfectly loving and merciful. So He wishes to give wicked people many chances to turn from evil to Him. So if you see wicked people presently prospering and not suffering the fury of God’s wrath do not mistakenly take this to mean He approves of their sins or is unjust. He is mercifully giving them longer to repent. 2 Peter 3:9 says: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” In Greek, the word “longsuffering” here is a form of the word “makrothumeo”. “Makrothumeo” means “be patient, forbearing towards someone” (Bauer, page 488).

The Greek word for “forebearance” is “anoche”. “Anoche” means “a holding back…a delay of punishment” (Vine, page 247) or “holding back, delay, pause” (Bauer, page 72). “Anoche” or a form of it are used in Romans 2:4 and 3:26 in relation to God’s forebearance with sinners and their sins. Romans 2:4 uses a form of the word “anoche” in the sense of God withholding deserved punishment until the sinner has had sufficient time in God’s eyes to turn from their sin to Him.

In Romans 3:26, “anoche” is used in the context of either God delaying punishing many sinners in Old Testament times and/or in New Testament times prior to their conversion. This is even though His perfectly just nature always requires Him to punish sin immediately it is committed. Romans 3:25-26 says: “Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” The above verse refers to God demonstrating His righteousness through Jesus’ death. One aspect of God’s righteousness is His perfect justice. His justice demands punishment for all sin. So Romans 3:25 reveals God can delay punishing sinners without Him becoming unjust. God eternally preplanned Christ would take the substitutionary punishment owing to God’s justice in relation to every human sin.
Except for Christ’s predetermined death, God could have been accused of unjustly condoning evil by delaying the punishment of sinful unconverted humans. But if God had justly always immediately punished every sin, His wonderful mercy would never been seen. God’s perfect justice and mercy were manifested together in Jesus’ death.

God was gracious to unconverted sinners on the basis of Jesus’ eternally planned death, by in one sense passing over or disregarding their sins. In the original Greek, the words “has passed over” in Romans 3:25 is a form of the word “paresis”. “Paresis” means “passing over, letting go unpunished” (Bauer, page 626). “Paresis” is wrongly translated as “remission” in the King James Version. Acts 17:30 uses a different Greek word when it refers to God to some extent overlooking the ignorance of pagans in Old Testament times. When God passed over the sins of the unconverted for periods of time, this did not mean He forgot their sins or would not in future punish them if they did not turn to Him. When God passed over their sins, He delayed the time of punishment.

**Relevant Greek words for God’s sympathy and compassion towards humans**

The Greek word for “sympathetic” is “sumpatheo” (Vine, page 116). Vine defines “sumpatheo” as “to suffer with another…to be affected similarly…to have compassion upon” (pages 116-117). The word “sumpatheo” comes from the two Greek words “sun” meaning “with” and “pascho” meaning “to suffer” (Vine, page 117). Louw and Nida defines “sumpatheo” as “to share someone’s feeling in the sense of being sympathetic with” (page 295).

A form of “sumpatheo” is used in Hebrews 4:15 of Jesus Christ: “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” This verse shows Jesus Christ suffers when we suffer and deeply feels for us because of the weaknesses we have. He is deeply touched when He observes the problems we face in this life. What are you suffering at present? Jesus is suffering in His heart as a result of how much He loves you. Do you know this?

Hebrews 4:15 quoted above reveals Jesus was tempted in every way we are. He was tempted with sexual immorality, homosexuality, selfishness, pride, envy, jealousy, doubt, hatred, revenge, bitterness, drunkenness, idolatry, worry, selfish ambition, self-pity, fear, self-righteousness and every other sin imaginable. Luke 4:1-13 reveals how Satan tempted Jesus at different times. Jesus did not give in to any of these temptations. Also He hates every sin (see Hebrews 1:9). But because He was tempted by these things and had a human nature, He can be perfectly sympathetic towards us.

Clothed in human nature, the Lord experienced hunger (Matthew 4:4), loneliness (Matthew 4:4), misunderstanding (Matthew 8:9-13) and rejection (John 6:60-67). He permitted His friends to abandon Him at the most crucial time in His human life (Matthew 26:56, 69-75). He willingly allowed Himself to be bashed (Matthew 26:67), spat on (Matthew 26:67) and then murdered (Matthew 27:32-50). Throughout His human life, He experienced enough grief, suffering and heartache to be able to be perfectly sympathetic when each of us experience similar things.

The Greek word for “compassion” is “polusplanchnos”. “Polusplanchnos” means “very merciful, very compassionate” (Perschbacher, page 338) or “sympathetic, compassionate,
merciful” (Bauer, page 689). This word is used to describe God’s character in James 5:11: “…the Lord is very compassionate…” Because God is infinitely greater than us, He is able to feel compassion and sympathy for us far better than we can feel for ourselves.

God’s mercy expressed in the New Testament

In 1 Corinthians 1:3, Paul calls God “the Father of mercies”. Hebrews 2:17 reveals Jesus Christ – God the Son manifested in human nature – is merciful. Luke 1:78 speaks of having sins forgiven through the tender mercy of God. Ephesians 2:4 says God is “rich in mercy”, meaning He is full of mercy. This mercy is totally undeserved and free. Titus 3:4-7 also expresses we are saved by God’s mercy. 1 Peter 1:3 refers to our being born-again through God’s great mercy. Jude 21 links our receiving of eternal life to the mercy of Jesus Christ: “…looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life”. Hebrews 4:16 emphasises: “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Here we see that whenever we need God’s mercy because of our sins or the disasters or problems we have caused for ourselves, we will obtain it as a totally free gift of grace.

Healing is an act of God’s mercy

The Bible promises physical healing to God’s people (see Matthew 8:16-17 and 1 Peter 2:24). But some Christians treat healing as through they deserved it or had earned it by their great faith. Such people do not understand physical healing is based on God’s undeserved mercy. Paul’s revelation of this is seen in Philippians 2:27: “For indeed he was sick, almost unto death; but God had mercy on him…” Note Jesus healed those who came to Him requesting physical healing as an expression of God’s mercy. Examples of this are seen in Matthew 9:27-29, 15:21-28, 17:14-21, 20:30-34, Mark 10:46-52, Luke 17:12-19 and 18:35-34, Jesus also linked the receiving of healing to faith in Him. For example, Matthew 9:27-29 records: “When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, ‘Son of David, have mercy on us!’ And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord’. Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you.’” The fact physical healing is based on God’s loving mercy is seen also in Matthew 9:36, 14:14 and 20:34 which reveal Jesus healed because of His enormous compassion for people. True faith receives healing as a glorious expression of God’s mercy, love and grace. Faith does not try to earn or deserve healing. Healing is a glorious privilege of God’s grace, mercy and love, not some type of deserved merited right.

God’s supernatural help is a result of His mercy

All of God’s supernatural help in our lives is due to His undeserved mercy. An example of this is recorded in Luke 1:5-25 and 1:57-58. Zechariah and Elizabeth could not have children, but God miraculously gave them a son, John the Baptist. Luke 1:57-58 refers to this as the Lord’s great mercy: “Now Elizabeth’s full time came to her to be delivered, and she brought forth a
son. When her neighbours and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her…” Even under the Mosaic Covenant, God’s miracles were expressions of His undeserved mercy or lovingkindness. Psalm 136:4 declares: “To Him who alone does great wonders, for His mercy endures forever.” We do not earn miracles as totally deserved rewards through good works. Throughout church history, multitudes have fallen into this error.

**We should continually glorify God for His marvellous mercy**

In Romans 15:9, Paul speaks of non-Israelites glorifying God because of His awesome mercy towards them: “And that the gentiles might glorify God for His mercy…” We should often thank and praise God for the many mercies He has shown us. Think of all the things He has done for you. This is His loving mercy revealed. Luke 17:15-18 shows Jesus was very saddened when only one of the ten lepers he healed returned to give glory to God for His great mercy to them.