

A Ministry of Mercy

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare wrote, "The quality of mercy is not strain'd. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven, Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed; It blesses him that gives and him that takes." It could be that he understood something about this amazing provision of God to sinners. In fact, when mercy becomes a reality in the heart of a Christian, that person's life becomes a beacon to people who are struggling.

So many of us are trying to stay afloat by our own strength, playing the part of the "good Christians" yet feeling defeated at every test. In fact, the main purpose behind every trial that comes our way is to conform us to Christ's image. A significant part of His essence is the manifestation of mercy.

As we will see in this booklet, mercy is one of the most releasing characteristics of the nature of God. Without it, we could never receive all the benefits of His love and grace, since we

would always be trying to measure up to His standards. Only a broken vessel can be made available to this ministry of mercy. And only one who has received mercy can rest with the Lord in the midst of the storm.

Chapter One
MERCY THAT KEEPS US
FROM FAINTING

“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not” (2 Corinthians 4:1).

That is a very powerful verse. It says that because we have received mercy, we do not “faint”—we do not become despondent, we do not become depressed, and we do not lose heart.

Paul made a point of saying that we have “*this* ministry.” It is a very special kind of ministry. But the part that is such a blessing says that Paul did not faint because he had obtained mercy.

At salvation, God gave us sixty-eight things that we don’t deserve.* That is an operation of grace. In terms of divine discipline, while grace means that we get what we do not deserve, mercy means we do not get what we *do* deserve.

Many married couples do not give each other mercy. It takes knowing God to have mercy

toward a wife who nags. The husband who has received mercy from God will not give her what she deserves: He won't react with anger, he won't treat her unkindly. Instead, he will give her what she does not deserve: gentleness, kindness—*grace*. While the world may call that weakness, the Bible calls it God-likeness.

Mercy Enables the Disabled

Oh, to understand mercy and to understand grace! In twenty-six consecutive verses, Psalm 136 speaks of mercy.

Every one of us could choose to dwell on the difficulties we face; but seeing that we have this ministry, "we faint not." It is a ministry of mercy and grace.

According to 1 Timothy 1:12, God enabled Paul and counted him faithful, putting him in the ministry. This shows me that it is God who calls us, and it is God who enables us to do what He requires. Every humble pastor I have ever known would agree that God is the faithful One. *He* enables us to serve in the ministry.

Who could be placed in the ministry if God didn't enable him? I don't know of anybody. The apostle Paul said, "I was a blasphemer. I was a persecutor. I was an injurious person." But he

was then able to say, "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Furthermore he said, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ was with me, along with His love and His faith."

Then he said, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners...." And I would like to have been there when he wrote this next phrase: "...of whom I am chief."

Paul didn't say, "I was chief." I could understand that. He said, "I *am* chief." What amazing humility!

He said, "I obtained mercy first, that the Lord Jesus Christ might show longsuffering, so that could be a pattern for everyone else who would believe unto everlasting life."

This is such a beautiful passage. What Paul said was, "What happened to me will happen to every believer. They will obtain mercy and find grace along with faith and love from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Less Than the Least

"I was a blasphemer, a persecutor; I killed people and injured them. And here I am! A minister of mercy." Afterward, through God's mercy and grace, Paul became one of the greatest ministers who ever lived.

He said that by grace, God placed him who was “less than the least of *all* the saints” into the ministry, that he might preach to the Gentiles (see Ephesians 3:7-8).

“Less than the least...” That is such an unusual phrase in the Greek text. If you can imagine what the least is, Paul was saying, “I’m not even there; I am less than that.”

Think of what you consider the worst thing a person could be, and Paul was proclaiming, “Once you get there, I am less than that. To me, who am less than the least was this grace given. Why? That I would preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ.”

Now you can understand why he said in 2 Corinthians 4:1, “...Seeing we have this ministry...” The use of the participle speaks of this truth that has been made a reality by mercy.

“Seeing we have this ministry, we faint not.”

Again, the word “faint” means to lose heart, to be despondent, to enter into cycles of depression, and to let your emotions take the place of thinking with God. Do not become “weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

**Read What Happened When You Received Christ?, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Two

HOW TO FLY LIKE AN EAGLE

“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

“He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength” (Isaiah 40:28-29).

God said in Isaiah 40:25, “To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal?” And I want to say, “Nobody, God. The devil is not equal to You. The demon armies all put together are not equal to You. No wicked man is equal to You; no man can do anything against You. No one is Your equal; nothing can match your strength and your greatness.”

He said, “Lift up your eyes on high, and see the One who created all of these things and who bringeth out the host by his might. Look at the billions of stars I created—and I call them all by

name, for I am strong in power.”

Then He addressed Jacob, saying, “Why do you think you can hide from me, or that I don’t see what’s going on in your life?” (See Isaiah 40:26-27). He went on to say that young men faint and get weary; and even special young men will fall:

“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength....” I love that promise. “...They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31)

God wants to teach us how to be “eagle” Christians. The eagles fly so high that they soar above the clouds and the storms.

Deuteronomy 32:11 explains that when the young eagle is eight to twelve weeks old, the mother trains it in such a beautiful way. She nudges the eaglet out of its nest and lets it drop, then she flies under it, catching the young one before it falls to the ground. Amazing!

So the young one falls on the mother; then she does it again and again. Eventually, after about the fourth time, the little baby eagle learns to use its wings, and it flies with the mother underneath.

Do you know what verse that reminds me

of? “Underneath us are his everlasting arms,” God’s eternal hands uphold us. And no matter how close to the bottom we think we are, His arms are always underneath (Deuteronomy 33:27).

The Secret to Looking and Feeling Young Again

“Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Psalm 103:5).

Every spring, without exception, eagles grow new feathers. So an eagle can be very old, yet, with its brand-new feathers, it can look so beautiful every spring.

Also, eagles dwell in high places. Often they make their nests high on rock ledges, in the strong places that can withstand the harsh weather (Job 39:27-29).

Psalm 92:12-14 correlates with these verses perfectly. It says that the righteous will flourish and shall bring forth fruit “in an old age” because they are established upon the Rock, Jesus Christ.

As we get to know Him and His ways, we fall more deeply in love with the Lord Jesus Christ. What a beautiful thing! Here is the Lord, and He says, “Listen! I want you to get to know Me. Don’t just enjoy knowledge about me. Get

to know Me; get to know who I am. I am the Creator of the ends of the earth. I do not faint—I do not get weary; I do not lose heart; and I do not become despondent.”

The Beauty of Wings

The eagle is mentioned more than any other bird in the Bible. They are able to look right into the sun, able to soar higher and swifter than any other bird can fly.

God says, “I want you to realize that instead of looking at circumstances, and instead of looking at people, wait on Me.” The youth fall, and young men get weary and faint, and then they utterly fall. But not so with those that wait upon the Lord, because “they that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength, and they will mount up with wings as eagles.”

The concept of wings is interesting. Wings serve as protection for the baby chicks, and they enable the birds to fly and to soar up high. Oh, the beauty of wings! They have such power and such strength.

What does God mean when He says, “they shall run and not be weary”? We are always having our strength renewed. Later, however, our life may slow down to a walk and we may

no longer work, perhaps because we are sick and confined to bed. But when all of that is going on, God still has a plan and a provision. In the Hebrew texts, to “run” means that we can go full-speed ahead at whatever we do in life. To “walk,” however, means that we can’t do those things now, yet we go on with integrity and the capacity God gives.

So if you are sick and laid up in a hospital, thank God for His mercy. You did run and did not get weary; but now you have slowed down to a walk, and you do not faint.

Chapter Three
CALLED TO MANIFEST
HIS MERCY

“For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

“For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

“Even so have these also now not believed, *that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy*” (Romans 11:29-31).

It is important to remember that, at first, our calling is not to a place; it is to a *Person*—the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God says that He gives us a sound mind—not one of fear, “but of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). Second Timothy 1:9 is referring to us when Paul says that God has called us with a holy calling. This means that no matter what we do for a living, we work as men and women with a holy calling.

One of the mistakes many people make is that they don't understand their calling. Your calling is holy. That is why you don't need to get nervous. That's why you don't need to get frustrated. Everything you do, everything you touch, relates to a holy calling.

To be "holy" means to grow in our spiritual life by completely embracing God's life and being embraced by God. Then, we execute the promises, execute our faith, and if we fail, we execute rebound without becoming discouraged.

A holy calling is to a Person. That makes our eyes, our tongue, our hands, and our feet *God's*. He satisfies our mouth with good things, and He renews our youth as the eagle's.

A New Kind of Health Insurance

Oh, if only we would grasp what the three top psychologists in the world have said regarding stress. Stress, in their conviction, causes 75 percent of all the problems we have. They add that people do not understand stress, because it isn't something that we can easily define. We face so many stress factors that seem insignificant, yet unless we learn to deal with the root, the combination of stressors can cause a complex of mental, physical, and spiritual illnesses.

Seventy-five percent! Scores of the ailments that you have are simply related to stress.

Jesus said, “I created everything, and I call out the stars by name. I am strong and mighty in power. But don’t you know that I don’t get weary and I don’t faint? Wait upon Me. Trust Me with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. Acknowledge Me in all of your ways. I vow to you, I promise to you, that I will renew your strength, and I will direct your paths (see Proverbs 3:5-6). You will become an ‘eagle’ Christian, a manifestation of mercy.”

Mercy Teaches Us to Wait

“Seeing we have this ministry, we faint not, because we have obtained mercy.” I love to think of this.

We have the ministry of the Word of God, a ministry of mercy: We will never, ever get what we deserve—and we deserved hell. What’s more, because of a ministry of grace, God will never take away from us what He has given us that we *don’t* deserve. His unconditional love and His faith will always be toward us.

I am so overwhelmed that this precious Lord is like that. No wonder the Bible says, “Unto you which believe, he is precious” (1 Peter 2:7).

In your heart, speak to Him; tell Him how precious He is—what value He has: “The value of Your mercy, my God. The value of Your grace. The value of Your love. The value of our redemption by you through faith alone, by grace. Lord, with all of my heart, I love You and I thank You. You are so precious.”

Faith-Rest Drills

A problem is only a test, a “drill” from God. As we dwell upon how precious He is, we won’t think of any problems. We will deal with our problems, but very quietly through faith-rest. And when we mix faith with what we hear, we enter into faith rest (Hebrews 4:2,3 and 9-11).*

The most beautiful thing about a faith-rest drill is how God approaches us with the test. He will not test us beyond what we can handle (1 Corinthians 10:13). God says, “I am in you. We have supped together. We love each other; you are My child, and I cherish you. My purpose is not to hurt you but to have you grow and become able to enjoy all the riches of your inheritance. Now it is time for the faith-rest test. Are you ready?”

By God’s grace, we are ready. And we can stand before Him boldly and say, “Yes, I’m

ready, because in my worst state, when I am faint, You give me power and strength. When I have no might at all, You increase my strength, and You renew my mind. I could not ask for more than You do. I would never expect You to care for me and to provide for me the way You do. So Lord Jesus, with a single eye, I thank You, and I praise You. In this trial, I express my total love to You.”

He tells us how *not* to faint, but then He says, “If you do faint, I understand. That’s okay. You can be strong in Me, but if you don’t have any strength at all, it’s all right. I’ll increase your strength. The only thing I ask you to do is to just wait upon Me. Things will happen very quickly, because you are a member of My family. I am your Father, Jesus is your elder Brother and your Savior, and the Holy Spirit is your Comforter and guide, with the Word of God as your counsellor.”

The mercy of God! So often, we don’t even recognize the benefits of mercy toward us. By definition, to receive mercy is to see God withhold discipline or correction that we deserve. As we grow in our understanding of the greatness of His love toward us, we will not always live in fear of divine retribution. We will have a holy

and wholesome reverence for His Word and all that He is. We will be set free to minister the same gifts of grace and mercy that were given to us.

**To learn more about the subject of faith rest, read Walking in Faith, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

CONCLUSION

We have a divine provision that will take care of every ounce of guilt, shame, and condemnation we could face. But more than that, we have a divine proposition to deliver to lost people everywhere. Whether you are a mother at home, a factory worker, a lawyer, or a student, each one of us has a ministry that we can execute with joy:

“But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful*” (Luke 6:35-36). This kind of mercy will draw others to the God we represent with a ministry of mercy.