



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

13 – The Mercy of God

10/1 @6:30
Grace Group at 3513
Northpointe Dr

10/3 @6:00
Grace Group at
2070 Corley Dr

10/3 @6:30
Grace Group at
1710 Mariposa Dr

ICE BREAKER: If someone does something against you, are you more likely to show mercy or seek justice?

REVIEW: Was there anything covered or said on Sunday that you had any questions or comments about?

READ: Philippians 2:25-30

One of the things that makes studying the letter of Paul so incredible is that even in “mundane” things like giving reasons for sending Epaphroditus back to the Philippians we find great and loaded theological points. Here Paul speaks of the mercy of God, and there are few things more incredible and deep than that! So today we will be diving into looking at the mercy of God. In particular I would like to spend time on three specific thoughts: what was the mercy of God to Epaphroditus, what was the mercy of God to Paul, and then finally apply those to ourselves and ask: what can we see of the mercy of God in our lives?

Let's first look at Epaphroditus. The mercy that Paul speaks of here is the physical healing of Epaphroditus. He was “ill to the point of death” and now he was ready to take the trip back from Rome to Philippi. Two quick points to make here. The first is that we can see the *physical* situations around us as the mercy of God. It is his mercy that puts roofs over our heads, food in our bellies, etc. Many of the things that we take for granted are directly attributed to the mercy of God. But secondly we can ask a hypothetical question: If Epaphroditus had not recovered physically, would God have still been merciful to him? I hope that we can pretty clearly see that the answer is a resounding “of course!” God saved Epaphroditus, gave him a ministry and a heart to serve and love God. There is no measure to the depths of the mercy of God that Epaphroditus had *already* seen even before God showed *even more* mercy by healing him.

DISCUSS: In what ways do you see the mercy of God in the situations that you find yourself in (here specifically physically.... We will get into emotions and spiritually here is a bit!)? How can we remind ourselves that God is always merciful?

We should note, however, that God had mercy not just on Epaphroditus, but on Paul also. For Paul it is *emotional* mercy. If we see where Paul is right now we can see this pretty clearly. He is in Roman jail. That's tough, but the Philippian church sends him a gift, that's good. But this reminds him of the not-so-great heart of the roman church, for there is no one there who looks out to the interests of others the way that they should. That's bad. Then he looks to Epaphroditus, and he is willing to give everything, even his life, in service to Paul, that's encouraging. But Epaphroditus is not just willing, but it looks like he is going to have to pay this ultimate cost, that's bad. Paul is probably feeling some guilt and heartbreak in thinking of these things and being on this emotional rollercoaster. And then, by some miracle of God, Epaphroditus gets better. God delivers him. Paul has no need to feel this heartbreak and sorrow that was welling up within him. And praise the Lord for that! We should not forget that the mercy of God often protects us from things that seek to bring us down. He is “near to the brokenhearted” and his mercy gives us peace and comfort!

DISCUSS: Why do we need the mercy of God when we are facing heartbreak and brokenness? How can we keep that in the forefront even when we face difficult situations?

But finally I would like us to note something that we have been seeing and sensing up to now, and that is that the same mercy that was shown Paul and Epaphroditus is shown to us **ALL THE TIME**. When life is difficult, God is merciful, when things are looking bad, God is merciful, when things get better, God is merciful, when we see comfort and peace, that's the mercy of God. As the prophet Jeremiah teaches us: “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end” (Lamentations 3:22).

DISCUSS: In what ways can you look and say: “this was the mercy of God in my life”? In what ways do we see the mercies of God “never coming to an end”?