

Sympathy, Mercy, and Pity

Harmony M.B.C., January 29, 2012
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Colossians 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

Parents in China sometimes pay mortuary workers to dispose of dead baby bodies. These babies have no funeral. March 30, 2010, we were told on the news that 21 bodies of some of these babies were found in a nearby lake, where mortuary workers had dumped them as their act apparently of disposing of the bodies.

In New York City, 20 people walk around a man stabbed and dying on the sidewalk, without offering him any help, and without calling for help or calling the authorities.

A girl and 8 boys attack and brutally beat a girl at a Seattle bus stop while pedestrians and 3 security guards stand by and watch. The security guards contract states that they are only to observe and report incidents. What does the contract held by the citizens standing around say? You can go to the internet and type in Chinese people beating victims to death and see multiple footage of crowds on the street and in buildings beating victims to death with concrete blocks, poles, etc. Nobody interferes. You can also type in the key words “Chinese eating human babies” and see grisly photos of Chinese preparing and eating small infants, probably fetuses.

In the United States alone, since 1973, parents and doctors have conspired together in committing 54,559,615 known murders (of helpless unborn children); without being prosecuted. This number of killed infants is equal to the entire population of Tennessee, Missouri, Arizona, Indiana, Massachusetts, Washington state, Virginia, and New Jersey combined. This planned, prosecution-free murder rate continues in the U.S. at about 1.2 million infants each year. (An interesting statistic: there are about 2.4 million non-abortion deaths in the U.S. each year, and about 4.1 births

All of these incidents, and thousands more, are a sobering testimony to the deadness to sympathy, mercy, and pity that is creeping over human kind. The real cause for the loss of humanity among mankind is all about the loss of connection with God and His laws. When societies deny the right of God to determine the laws of the land, to determine correct human behavior, then they set themselves up to come apart at the seams. Reason? If God does not establish the principles, rules of behavior, and policies for human-to-human relationships, the devil will.

So, what we see across the world, and maybe doubly so here in America, is the outcome of human cultures living by the rules of the devil. Within that framework, there is no place for sympathy, kindness, mercy, benevolence, because Satan’s code is born of rebellion and wickedness, cruelty and strife, hate and malice, and violence born of that hate and malice.

Our text speaks of another law that children of God can, and should, live by. This is a law of a God of love and mercy. It is not a law that is enforced by penalty of judgment, death, or other

punishment. It is a law that supercedes such threats. The law articulated in this text is formulated in grace, and has its power over humans who really do have a sense of what it means to be objects of grace.

We are not familiar with a phrase like we find here; “bowels of mercies.” But we are familiar with the phrase, “hearts full of sympathy, pity, and mercy.” This is what the apostle is writing about, and God enables believers to discover sympathy for those suffering from the human condition; and pity for the downtrodden; and He has instilled in His people a capacity and ability to show mercy. May the Lord help each one of us today to take this plea by the Apostle as one addressed to each of us personally.

I. The admonition speaks to a higher state or condition than that of the world (“...the elect of God...holy and beloved...”)

- ❖ We should view ourselves to be on a higher plane; with God as our Father, we should have a higher level of graces to depend on
 - It is more than an urban legend that sons very often act like their dads
 - When Jesus wanted to highlight the murderous and lying behavior of the Pharisees He told them, (**John 8:44**) Ye are **of your father the devil**, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.
 - Acting out anger, resentment, pride should never take the form we see acted out by the world
 - It is too often what we are first tempted to do...get even...strike back
- ❖ If we were to begin to name the characteristics of God as our Father, one that would come up first on the list is “God of mercy.” Without doubt, if God is in us, we should find a spirit of mercy in ourselves also.
 - **Luke 6:36** Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.
 - **1John 3:10** In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

II. In a long list of things a believer should adopt as modes of behavior, bowels of mercies are at the front

- ❖ This could suggest that it is the first thing a believer needs before he can move on to any other graces
 - **Prov.21:21** He that followeth after righteousness and mercy **findeth life**, righteousness, and honour.

III. So, what is the pattern of mercy? I think we may use one example to learn from: **Luke 10:30-35**

- ❖ I want you to notice a few things about this event involving this wounded Jew - we want to look at both the evidence of mercy and the evidence for the lack of mercy
 - First, vv. 31-32 - A symbol of the absence of mercy is this priest and this Levite who saw him, but passed by on the other side

- Lacking mercy, people try to ignore pain and suffering (it's a natural tendency, and it is also a defense mechanism in humans) - but in ignoring suffering and misery (that we are obviously confronted with which gives us an opportunity to show pity) is to promote it (but avoid the feelings of guilt for promoting it).
- Second, looking at evidences of mercy: there is no mention of the Samaritan showing benevolence, mercy, and pity to the robbers who violated this man's rights
 - (lesson: mercy is not about excusing the wicked, nor about excusing predators, abusers, people who do violence to others, nor people who play the system they live in for the purpose of taking advantage of others - I bring this up, because our legal system is choked with cases involving people who are being shown mercy for having shown NO mercy to their victims).
- Third, this Samaritan was not one who lived and thought like the Jew
 - (lesson: mercy does not pick and choose its targets based on some kind of cultural or lifestyle identity with them)
- Fourth, this Samaritan acted in total contradiction to both his upbringing, and popular opinion held by those back at home
 - (lesson: mercy must spring from the essence of Christ in us without being influenced or squelched by our human roots or by fleshly relationships)
- Fifth, unless we try to concoct some other reason for the behavior of this Samaritan, he was acting strictly from a position of having bowels of mercy
 - (lesson: let us examine our motive for the supposed mercy we show)

IV. Conclusion

- ❖ It is both our **duty** and our **privilege** to show mercy to fellow creatures, especially to those of the household of faith. But, we must **do it as God does**...that is, not looking inside the person who is to be the object of mercy; nor looking at the qualities that they might have...but rather looking at **their need and at our opportunity**.