

The Nature of Forgiveness is Mercy

- Ron Stullenbarger -

We would be wholly lost if it weren't for the abundant mercy of our heavenly Father. Romans 3:23-24 says, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* We are offered total and complete forgiveness of our sins because God loves us and has mercy on us. The mercy of God allots us freedom and restored relationship we could never attain on our own. We are not justified by our own works or inherent worth, but by God's mercy and grace.

The nature of forgiveness is mercy. The Bible tells us in Luke 6:36-37, *"Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven."* In order for us to be merciful with others, we must be consistently encountering and reflecting on the abundant mercy of God toward us. When we were at our lowest, God met us and offered us eternal, abundant life in Him. When we had no ability to attain right standing before our Creator, He brought Himself low, took on the form of a servant, and died for our sakes (Philippians 2:8).

You were saved by the greatest act of mercy the world will ever know. And now your heavenly Father is asking you to share the great mercy you have been shown. He's asking you to live and operate in His likeness by loving others the way you have been loved. The Bible commands us to forgive others. God doesn't give us the option. Colossians 3:13 says, *"Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."* James 2:13 says, *"For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."* If we are living with unforgiveness, we are living outside of the will of God.

God knows forgiveness is difficult. He knows that it takes courage and strength to offer mercy where it is undeserved. He paid the highest price for our sins by sending Jesus to an undeserving, gruesome death. But He also knows the joy that comes from reconciliation. He knows the goodness of wiping the slate clean that He might have restored relationship with us. And He longs for you to be a minister of reconciliation to all who have hurt you. He longs to overwhelm you with His love and mercy to the degree that offering others mercy and love comes from a place of overflow rather than your own strength. He longs to fill you with courage and perspective so that you can forgive those who need a glimpse of His mercy and grace.

Take time as you enter into prayer to receive the love and mercy of your heavenly Father. Allow Him to fill you up to overflowing today. And follow His guidance as He gives you grace to forgive others in obedience and love.