

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – July 23, 2023

Theme: The Power of God at Work in us Topic: God's Abundant Mercy

Main Texts: Romans 11:25-36

Key verse: Romans 9:15 – *“For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.” (NKJV)*

INTRODUCTION: Mercy is derived from the Greek word *eleeō*, which carries the basic idea of having a compassion for those in need that leads to meeting their need. In the Bible, mercy encompasses compassion, forgiveness, kindness, particularly towards those who are facing deserved punishment. God's mercy is a major theme of the Bible, appearing over 200 times. Apart from being a major theme of the Bible, God's mercy is something the world often struggle to comprehend. Those who have seen it on display have often been amazed and dismayed by it at the same time. Prophet Jonah was reluctant to go to Nineveh because of what he knew about God's mercy (Jonah 4:1-2). In the parable of the prodigal son, the older brother recoiled at his father's ready restoration of his younger brother after what the younger brother had done (Luke 16:11-32). Others like the Psalmist, Apostles Paul and Peter celebrated God's mercy (Psalm 51: 1-2; Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 Peter 1:3).

1. **(a) Read 1 Peter 1:3; Ephesians 2:4; (a) What does it mean to you that God is rich in mercy? (b) In Genesis 39, Joseph was falsely accused and imprisoned. Yet in verse 21, we are told that the favor he found before the chief warden was because of God's mercy to Joseph. What can we learn from this about the nature of God's abundant mercy? (c) Romans 11:25 wants us not to be ignorant of God's mercy. Why do you think understanding God's abundant mercy is important?**

The story is told of a desperate mother who came to beg Emperor Napoleon to spare the life of her son, who had been sentenced to die for failure to do his duty. Because this was the son's second offense, Napoleon pointed out that justice demanded his execution. "I don't ask for justice," the mother said, "I plead for mercy." "But he does not deserve mercy," Napoleon responded. "Sire," she cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it. Mercy is all I ask." Napoleon commuted the young man's sentence, and his life was spared. Rightly understood, the gospel is a humbling reminder that none of us is deserving of salvation. We are saved not because we are smarter or more spiritual than others who are yet to be saved. Romans 3:9 reminds us that, "all, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin." And that election and salvation have nothing to do with who we are or what we have done or will do (Romans 9:10-13). The Gentile Christians need mercy, same as the Jews, because both are coming from a position of disobedience (Romans 11:30-32). According to Cyril of Alexandria, "Jews and Gentiles were guilty of the same thing and ... they were likewise cleansed by one and the same grace."

2. **Read Romans 9:15; 11:25-32; (a) How does it make you feel knowing that we are saved because of God's abundant mercy? (b) Reflect on the way God is described in Romans 11:33-36. What picture does that conjure in your mind when you apply those adjectives to God's mercy? (c) How should understanding God's abundant mercy affect how we view and relate with those who are yet unsaved or caught up in other religions?**

The reason God provided a glorious salvation for mankind is that He is merciful. That all mankind is coming from a position of disobedience, shows us that no one deserves salvation. According to John Calvin "there is no reason why they who have a hope of salvation should despair of others; for whatever [Christians] may now be, they have been like all the rest. If [believers] have emerged from unbelief through God's mercy alone, they ought to leave place for it as to others also." Like someone said, when we come to God, we do not bring proof of our innocence. We do not offer Him something that would qualify us for His grace and forgiveness. Instead, we fall at His feet and beg for mercy—and God grants it. And the most amazing thing about this is the way God fully and freely forgives us, even though all we deserve is His wrath and punishment. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross made it possible for mercy and forgiveness to replace what we deserve, and for God to still be just.

3. **(a) Read Genesis 39:21; Psalm 51:1-2. What are some of the ways we experience this abundant mercy of God? (b) According to Ephesians 2:4-5 and Titus 3:5, what is the principal means of receiving God's abundant mercy? (c) What should our response be in the light of these?**

Prayer: *Father, we are amazed and awed that You have been gracious to us to grant us salvation who are so undeserving. Help us to hold out Your mercy to others, no matter how bleak their situation may seem to us. In Christ's name. Amen.*