

Grace And Mercy

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies and God of all comfort...”*

2 Corinthians 1:3

In Scripture, grace and mercy are two great words that speak of how the Lord deals with His people. Occasionally the word mercy may substitute for grace, but grace does not substitute for mercy.

What is the difference between grace and mercy you ask? Well one worthy biblical scholar said that grace deals with us as needy, and mercy deals with us as miserable.

Our verse today demonstrates the unique work of mercy because Paul calls God the same thing using two different words. He calls God the “Father of mercies” and then “the God of all comfort”. Paul is saying the same thing – using the synonyms mercy and comfort.

While all of us can be gracious, some of us are better at ministering comfort than others. I recall visiting my father in hospital near the end of his battle with cancer. Everyone knew he would

be gone in a few days or a couple of weeks at the most.

A deacon from my father’s church came to visit my Dad when I was with him in his hospital room one evening. The deacon should not have come. What he said was true but terribly irrelevant to my Dad’s situation.

The misguided deacon told about a single mom in the church that everyone knew well. Apparently she had lost her job, the bank was foreclosing on her house, and one of her sons was in trouble with the law. As best he could, my Dad tried to express sympathy.

Why this poor deacon thought the information would bring comfort to a dying man escaped me completely. I wanted to rebuke him on the spot but that would have been equally unhelpful to my Dad. So as gently as I could, I suggested to the deacon that my father was exhausted and needed to rest. I told the man it was time to leave.

That deacon knew nothing about mercy and how to comfort people in pain. However, he was known to be gracious and – in the case of the mother he spoke of – I was aware that he helped her financially for some time until she could find another job.

Let us all be gracious as the Lord gives us opportunity to meet one another’s needs. However, let us pray for those who know how to be merciful that they will have strength to do their special ministry among us. We need both *grace and mercy* as we deal with the harsher issues of life. Let us pray for one another that we get both in abundance.

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