

"A PRAYER POSTURE OF GRACE AND MERCY"

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Homeward: "A series about learning to orient our lives."

- Intro Week... "Prayer is effective in every circumstance and situation."
- Last Week... "How we Pray" – The Lord's Prayer Template
- This Week... "Our Prayer Posture"

All postures can work, but a few seem to be more consistently taught in Scripture than others.

- These postures seem to line up best with who God is and how He receives the prayers of His people...

The Prayer Postures of... "Grace and Mercy"

(Vs) Psalm 145:8,9 – "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made."

(Vs) James 5:11 NIV – "The Lord is full of compassion (grace) and mercy."

- Since Mercy and Grace are a foundational part of who God is, and a huge concept for both a Christian's every day and prayer life.
- We're going to look at each one individually... Starting with Grace.

Grace: "Think of grace as being rewarded when we *don't* deserve it."

- ... God blessing the unworthy.

Elisha and the Widow's Oil

- This story from 2nd Kings tells the plight of a woman who has lost her husband and is now faced with debts she cannot pay.
- The debt collectors are on their way to collect her sons and make them slaves when the widow seeks Elisha for help.

(Vs) 2nd Kings 4:1 – "Now the wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord, but the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves."

Sometimes the problems around me cannot be fixed... – She Cries Out!

(Vs) 2nd Kings 4:2 – And Elisha said to her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me; what have you in the house?”

- I like this verse so much...He asks her a question, but doesn't get an answer... – She Waits!
- So, he asks, in essence, what has the Lord already provided... What do you have already?

(Vs) 2nd Kings 4:3,4 – And she said, “Your servant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil.” ³ Then he said, “Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, empty vessels and not too few. ⁴ Then go in and shut the door behind yourself and your sons and pour into all these vessels. And when one is full, set it aside.”

Sometimes we just don't know what were supposed to pray... – She's Honest!

- When seeking God, allow yourself some space to really look around your life...
- You might be surprised where He's already working!

(Vs) 2nd Kings 4:5,6 – So she went from him and shut the door behind herself and her sons. And as she poured, they brought the vessels to her. ⁶ When the vessels were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another vessel.” And he said to her, “There is not another.” Then the oil stopped flowing.

I think this is where many of us lose our way... – She Believed!

- We cry out!
- We wait.
- We are honest with what we have or don't have.
- Then, when God's solution presents itself... we doubt!
- And so, in essence... “We don't gather enough jars!”

Last verse in the story! ...

(Vs) 2nd Kings 4:7 – She came and told the man of God, and he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on the rest.”

- Notice: She seeks more direction...
- Even though she now had something she went back and asked for the same kind of guidance she did when she had nothing.

Elisha knew there would be days we think we have nothing, and that we must look to God for provision...

- If Elisha had invited himself into the widow's small house and worked the miracle for her, then no one would have been surprised. After all, this was a mighty man of God; what would you expect?

- But this time, wisely, Elisha insisted the miracle be between the widow and God—so she could see how sufficient the Lord really was for her...God in His grace supplied all (and more) that she needed.

This is what praying with a Posture of Grace looks like.

- We Cry Out...
- We Wait for God to respond...
- We're Honest with what we have...
- We Believe God can...
- We Seek Him for more direction.

May you have a prayer life filled with Grace beyond measure...

- So, if we are thinking of grace as being rewarded when we don't deserve it...

Mercy: "Think of mercy as not being punished when we do deserve it."

- God delivering us from judgment.

(Vs) Psalm 4:1 NIV – "Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer."

"God is very good at Mercy!"

*(Vs) Deuteronomy 4:21 NIV – "For the Lord your God is a **merciful** God . . ."*

*(Vs) Micah 7:18 NIV – "[You] delight to show **mercy**."*

*(Vs) 2nd Samuel 24:14 NIV – "Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his **mercy** is great . . ."*

One of the best examples of how merciful God is lies alongside a text describing one of the worst people in all of scripture...

Manasseh, King of Judah

(Vs) 2nd Chronicles 13:1-6, 9 – "Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. ² And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down, and he erected altars to the Baals, and made Asheroth, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. ⁴ And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, "In Jerusalem shall my name be forever." ⁵ And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. ⁶ And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger..."

⁹ "Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel."

The Lord Confronts:

(Vs) 2nd Chronicles 13:10 – “The Lord spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention.”

- I’ve always wondered what they missed!

Manasseh’s Problems and Pain:

(Vs) 2nd Chronicles 13:11 – “Therefore the Lord brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon.”

Manasseh's Prayer for Mercy:

(Vs) 2nd Chronicles 13:12-13 – “And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. ¹³ He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.”

Manasseh’s Transformed Heart:

(Vs) 2nd Chronicles 13:15,16 – “And he took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the Lord, and all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the house of the Lord and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside of the city. ¹⁶ He also restored the altar of the Lord and offered on it sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving, and he commanded Judah to serve the Lord, the God of Israel.”

It feels to me that Praying within a posture of mercy almost always has this heart-transforming effect upon the prayer’s heart...

- Perhaps this is why the Lord is constantly calling us back to this posture before Him and each other...

(Vs) Zechariah 7:8 – “Thus says the Lord of hosts, render true judgments, show kindness (Grace) and mercy to one another.”

(Vs) Micah 6:8 NIV – “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

This is and always has been the message of Jesus...

*(Vs) Ephesians 2:4-9 – “But God, **being rich in mercy**, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable **riches of his grace** in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...”*

May we each experience the Homeward Orienting prayer posture of Grace and Mercy!