

Sovereign Mercy

by Rolfe Barnard

The gospel of the glory of God is a message of hope and salvation that proclaims the goodness, authority, and sovereign mercy of God.

Duration: 44:50

Scripture: Genesis 3:7, Exodus 33:18, Matthew 6:33, 1 Timothy 1:11-12

Topics: "Mercy Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the gospel of the glory of God. He highlights three key points of this gospel: the goodness of God, the authority of Jesus Christ, and the fact that God must do what is right and can show mercy. The preacher acknowledges the responsibility of every believer to spread this gospel and the joy that comes from being entrusted with it. He also mentions the concept of the glory of God, referencing a passage in Exodus and expressing the desire to see and experience the fullness of God's glory.

Transcript

I was once far away from the Savior, and as vile as a sinner could be, and I wondered if Christ the Redeemer could save a poor sinner like me. I wandered on in the darkness, not a ray of light could I see, and a thought filled my heart with sadness, there's no hope for a sinner like me. And then, in that dark, lonely hour, a voice sweetly whispered to me, Say, Christ the Redeemer has power to save a poor sinner like me.

I then fully trusted in Jesus, and oh, what a joy came to me. My heart was filled with His praises for saving a sinner like me. And when life's journey is over, and I, the dear Savior, shall see, I'll praise Him forever and ever for saving a sinner like me.

Now, if you'll open the Bible tonight to the book of Timothy. First, book of Timothy, chapter 1, again reading at verse 11. Break in the middle of a dissertation about the usages of the law, and the Apostle Paul starts verse 11 this way, according, the better rendering of it, according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Then he says, I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. The most solemn thing that any child of God will ever face is

suggested to us in verse 11.

I do not share the convictions of the old Puritans from whom we read so much, and at whose blessed feet we've sat to learn the gospel, but I think they knew nothing, I say I think they knew nothing about what a church is. And I think they have harmed us because we are wont to take everything they say literally without screening it by the word of God. I do not believe that they were right in their definition of a church.

And I said that to say this, that I believe, don't ask anybody to believe it with me, that most of us people who claim to believe in the grace of God also desperately need to remember that the Apostle Paul wasn't guilty like we are of pouring water in a barrel that had no bottom. He was given a two-fold ministry. He was a minister of the grace of God, the gospel of God's grace, but he was also a minister of the church.

And he understood that the two go together. Living in a day like we do, with great controversy about what the gospel is, it behooves every professing child of God to take seriously the truth that the whole of the New Testament is a protest against the division between what we call the preacher and the people. In the New Testament, every child of God has a ministry, and every one of us are to be heroes and proclaimers of the gospel.

I wish we believed that, we don't, but it's so. It's so. And I said all that to say this, that there isn't a child of God between the eternities that hadn't better face seriously his part in the proclamation of the gospel of the glory of the blessed God which was committed to your trust.

It is not simply for what we call public preachers. I think the world will continue to go to hell as long as we follow the Catholics and the dear old Puritans who knew more about the gospel the minute we'll ever know, but I think knew nothing about church much. I think it desperately, desperately, desperately urgent that every human being that dares to claim that in their heads and in their hearts they actually believe that salvation is of the Lord, brother, you need to become a flaming witness of that.

It will not do to keep that to yourself. This is the need of the hour. I wonder if I come sit down beside you, talk with you privately just a little while.

Are you in on this business? Have you taken seriously the fact that the gospel of the glory of the blessed God has been committed to your trust? Surely the public preacher has to face that. I've tried to face it for these years. There isn't anything, as I said, between the eternities that challenges this preacher quite so much as being told in the word of God that I'm to say move over, Paul.

I have to get in on this too. You can't have it by yourself. This great gospel of the glory of a blessed God has been committed to my trust.

If I keep it, I'll lose it. If I spread it, I'll gain it. You know anything that's calculated to make life worth living, something more than making a living and preparing for old age, just getting up in the morning and going to bed at night, you know anything comparable to having a part, having entrusted to us the good news of the glory of the blessed God? In the book of Exodus, at chapter 33, we find the first mention of the glory of God.

I have called your attention, and I'm sure it's something that all of you know, by heart, of the law of first mention. When young preachers come to me, and I've had some come, and ask that I help them, if I might, as much as I could, to find out what the gospel is, I immediately turn to the 33rd chapter of Exodus, where in verse 18, a man by the name of Moses made a request of Almighty God. Surely if God is a living

person, and not a creed, surely if he's alive, and if the good news about his son is the good news of that which brings glory to God, surely if the Old Testament that speaks so much about the Shekinah glory that'll fill the temple, and the glory that clothed Adam and Eve before they sinned, surely the Old and the New Testament that speaks so much about glory, the glory of God, surely if he's alive, the greatest thing on earth that could happen to any eternity-bound human being would be to get a glimpse of that glory.

And Moses said, Lord, I beg you, show me thy glory. And the Lord said, all right, I will. Here it is.

But before I show it to you, let me remind you, in verse 20 he said, thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live. And the Lord said, tell you what I'm going to do, Moses. Behold, there's a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock, and it shall come to pass while my glory passeth by, that I'll put thee in a cleft of the rock, and I'll cover thee with my hand as I pass by, and I'll take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen.

What the Lord said before he said, now, Moses, I'm going to grant your request the best I can. But I can't answer it, can't grant it a hundred percent, kid you. We sing that old song, oh, that will be glory for me, when by his grace I shall look on his face, that shall be glory for me.

And we are told when the Lord comes back, we shall see him as he is. If we did it now with undimmed view, couldn't take it. That look, as we see him as he really is, complete our salvation, we shall be like him.

We shall be like him because we've seen him as he is. I'm just fumbling for words. I'm talking about the most wonderful thing between the eternists at night, just to get a glimpse of this glory that's so wonderful that the Lord will say, I'll have to hide you in this rock now.

And as I pass by, I put my hand in front of you so you can't see me. As I've just about gone out of seeing distance, I'll remove my hand and let you get a little glimpse of my glory. That's all you can take.

According to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. A man told me 30 some odd years ago, he said, Robson, I'd love to see you enter the ministry. That's haunted me ever since.

One day, I'd love to be able to preach on the glory. Surely if I could see his glory, just as it passes by, just a little glimpse of it just behind bars, it'll meet every need I've got, encourage my faith, put unction in my voice, tears in my heart, joy on the way to heaven. The glory of God.

The glory of God seen in the gospel of God concerning his son. That which we take for granted is so wonderful that this generation's never got a glimpse of the glory in the cross of Christ or in his throne. The gospel of God's glory is the gospel of God's marvelous grace.

The best definition for grace that I've ever found is in spite of. God saves people in spite of ten million things. God gets glory in spite of us.

I never have found a man that I thought God could use. He uses them in spite of. I've never preached in a church that deserved a single drop of blessing from God.

I never have. If you get any blessing, it's in spite of. Oh, the depth of the grace of God.

And yet it's in his grace that he shows us a little glimpse of his glory. Now, Moses, are you ready? I've got you in the cleft of the rock and I've got my hand before you so you can't see me. Of course you did.

You died. I'm going to get you a little glimpse of my glory. Filter through.

Here it is. Verse 19. God said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy upon whom I will show mercy.

The gospel of the glory of God has three points. It's the story of the goodness of God. It's the story of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's the story of the fact, it's the proclamation of the fact, that God must do right and he may show mercy. If I have studied anything in the word of God, try to come up with what the scriptures teach. It's the sovereign mercy of a thrice holy God.

Long since I learned that a gospel that does not soak with the goodness of God is not the gospel of God. Long since I learned that a gospel that doesn't come and proclaim the utter authority, absolute authority over everything that rives and wriggles, men, women, events and everything else, if it does not give the preeminence and rest all glory and all authority in the only begotten Son of God, it cannot be the gospel of God's glory. I can remember in the park on Sunday mornings, preachers in this town crying out in their pulpits, Ralph Barnard's a liar, you can't have Jesus as Savior without having him as Lord.

But I'm not a liar. I was not a liar then. The gospel that preaches Jesus any other place than sitting on a throne, exercising all authority and power and dominion is not the gospel of the glory of God.

Oh, I will proclaim the name, that's the authority of the Lord. Then the gospel brings us into that realm of mystery. The gospel is not the gospel if it does not treat of God as a God who is gracious to whom he will.

And the gospel is not the gospel of God if it doesn't preach about God who shows mercy to whom he will. Long since I learned that it isn't doctrine that's the center of controversy. I learned that we've come to this as a hot issue, whether or not we shall preach a gospel that leaves men and women with one thing they can brag about.

Or whether we'll preach a gospel that builds churches full of men and women who can say from their heart, but God forbid, that I should glory say in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel that allows one person to glory one with is not the gospel of the glory of God. I do not come tonight and profess to be able to enter in the depth of this last expression.

I'll show grace, be gracious to whom I will be gracious. And I'll show mercy to whom I will show mercy. I don't know whether I understand that or not.

I just know it's the language of the Apostle Paul who repeats it time after time after time. And it's his way of reducing men and women to where they'll face three truths. First, God's saving, sovereign mercy is not owed to men.

It is not something that men deserve. It is not something that men can demand of God. If it is, it's no longer mercy.

All my days I've preached in a so-called religious or church or Christian with a question mark grounded atmosphere in a generation where what we call the gospel has spawned a nation and churches that actually believe that every human being is entitled to be the object of God's divine mercy. That is burned

and taught and engraved and buried in mankind. And this is the offense of the gospel of the glory of God.

For it is desperately true that if any man is entitled to God's mercy, then there is no such thing as mercy. For mercy is something that undeserving people receive. But if they deserve it, they're no longer candidates.

I know that when the Apostle Paul will say, it is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. That's deep water there, brother. But he's trying to tell men and women that if they have obtained mercy like Paul said he did, God gave it to them and he gave it to them.

He didn't pay it to them, he gave it to them. For he must do right or he won't be God. He may show mercy.

I know that when Moses is told by Almighty God, one part of the gospel of the glory of God is to tell men and women what seems to be terribly offensive, that salvation is not a swap. It's not something that you can bargain for. It's not something you can deserve.

It's not something you can pay for. No, sir, it's a gift. And God bestows his mercy as he wills, as he wills.

Now, if a sinner insists on justice, he may get it. But if he insists on justice, according to the word of God, hell will be his portion. The only hope for a sinner is to bow to God's judgment upon him and cast himself on the mercy of court and plead just one thing and with an empty hand stand in the presence of God, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst, thou canst.

I never shall forget, yes, since down in South Carolina, I preached for about, oh, maybe a week in a congregation and came up to the second Sunday, I remember now, and the young pastor came to me and said, Brother Barton, would you meet with the congregation this afternoon at three o'clock and let us ask you some questions. By that time, the Lord had given me the people's hearts and they were beginning to listen to me. But my message was so different, they said, and they were torn all to pieces.

And he said, we don't want to fuss with you, Brother Barton, we want to listen to you, but my people want to ask a question. Maybe if you could explain some things. Just got them all balled up.

I said, why, sure, I'll be delighted to come. Got there that afternoon, the little house was packed full. And the question, they've got but one question.

The pastor asked the first question. He said, Brother Barton, Brother Barton, don't God give everybody a chance to be saved? And I said, salvation is not by chance. Salvation is by God's grace.

And that wound up the question. That answered all the difficulties. Salvation isn't God giving everybody a square deal and a fair chance.

Salvation is God, in spite of giving men and women salvation, the gift of eternal life. We get that set, it'll unravel all the other problems. God says, I'll show mercy to whom I will show mercy.

And the Apostle Paul said I was a persecutor and I was a blasphemer and I was injurious, but God called me to the ministry to save me. And the whole thing is explainable according to Paul. Not by something he did, but by something he received.

He said the difference was that I obtained mercy. I obtained, I didn't have it, didn't deserve it, couldn't buy it, couldn't earn it. God showed mercy to me and it didn't make him mad.

He is glad that he'd obtained mercy, that he'd obtained mercy. Mercy, saving mercy, saving mercy must be obtained from a living Lord. Saving mercy is not in a jar that you can uncap.

It's not in a swimming pool you can get your dipper and dip in. It is in the nail-struck hands of a man in glory. And a man cannot obtain, suffer, and save at mercy without doing business with the crucified Son of God who's not dead now, but he's alive forevermore.

He's the one that heals the sinners. He's the one. We ought to be careful lest we cuss out the Catholics and preach the same gospel.

No, no, you find a good Catholic, he's more orthodox than any of you people are. He believes in the cross of Christ from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet, but he knows nothing about a living Lord, a living Lord. But a dead Christ, unless God raised him and made him a life-giving spirit, then there's no power between the eternities that can give life to a dead sinner.

But the Bible says that Adam was a living soul and Christ has been made, made a life-giving spirit. And the sovereign mercy of God now is under control of the living Lord. This generation of church members is going to split hell wide open believing a creed or a doctrine and not be enjoined to a living Lord and imposing on the mercy of God and taking it for granted.

But you cannot obtain mercy as Paul said he did. Unless you're confronted in the scriptures, in the gospel, in the power of the Holy Spirit with the same risen Lord he was. He's on his road to Damascus and he met a person.

And unless the Holy Spirit makes the living person of the Son of God leap up between the pages of the New Testament and you're brought face to face with him, you'll never be able to say with Paul, I've obtained mercy. I've obtained mercy. It's not a creed to believe, it's a blessing to be received.

Oh, you have to do business with the living Lord to obtain mercy. To obtain mercy. I've got a third thing to say about this mercy.

The scriptures say that he'll show mercy to whom he will. The Apostle Paul and I, I do not believe the man has yet lived who really yet understands the ninth chapter of Romans. I know Brother John Calvin missed it.

I'm smart enough to know that, but he tackled it. He didn't make fun of it like to do today. Well, that's some chapter.

And there's a verse in that chapter that says that he shows mercy to whom he will and whom he will to your heart. I'm telling you that's some verse of scripture. That's some verse of scripture.

And I know I haven't got sense enough to plumb its depths, but just to read it sort of takes me down a little notch off my cocky high horse and makes me understand that if any man on earth ever has the slightest reason to believe he's obtained mercy, he ought to be mighty thankful, Brother, because Almighty God professes that some people he'll harden. And the Lord, when he was here, said as the Father, gives life to whom he will. Even so the Son raises from the dead whom he will.

That's a scary verse of scripture. It's not of him that runneth or willeth, that seems to sort of limit my great big will and what all would happen if I do like I ought to do. It's not of him that willeth or runneth, but of God

that showeth mercy.

What do those scriptures mean? Well, it certainly means this, that my salvation's in his hands, I got to face that. It certainly means that I can't pay for it, I deserve it. But God bless your heart, it means more than that.

It means the offer of mercy is as wide as the heart of Almighty God. I do not believe that a single one of the scriptures I've read tonight is meant to discourage anybody except somebody's trying to tell God what they think he ought to do. I believe that these scriptures, instead of being discouraging, open wide and teach that the wickedest sinner out of hell may rightly become a candidate for the mercy of God.

If I pick up a Bible and it claimed to be that which I'm to live by and die by and salvation was extended only to people that I decided to extend it to, that'd be a scary proposition. But if I can preach a mercy that God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the same God who turned his back on his own son when he cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And God Almighty turned his back on him and the earth shook and the sun refused to shine in protest. A God who'll do that! I'm not afraid to trust the wideness of his mercy and I'm not afraid to tell the wickedest sinner out of hell that if the disposition of the mercy of God is up to God, that's good news, brother.

He'll save folks that I wouldn't save. I'd tell them to go on to hell. Oh, his mercy would be wider than all of ours put together.

Whatever else may be said about the love of God is greater far than any of us have ever been able to tell. And we need not think we'll embarrass God if we try to put limits on to it. You hear me? You know what these strange texts teach this poor preacher? Bless your dear heart.

They teach me that this side of God's rejection and this side of death, God's mercy flows mighty freely in the direction of anybody on God's earth who's the slightest bit interested in not being a subject of God's justice but being a candidate for the grace and mercy of God. There's a wideness in God's mercy because he's a God of love. That's right, my friend.

I read in the Word of God where it talks about O'Ralph Barnett, Shapire then, dead in trespasses and sin. My daddy, the devil, had a ring in my nose. I was a child of disobedience.

I was a child of wrath and I followed the course of the awful anti-Christian spirit of this present day. But I read in the next verse, But God, but God, who is rich in mercy he got plenty, he got plenty for a great love, where was it? But God, but God, when I read scriptures like he'll show mercy to whom he will, they do not discourage me. But I say, but God, you get God in on it, brother.

If God's dispense in mercy, if God's show in grace, he don't do it like we would, brother. He gives it and shows it to people who don't deserve it. And the best thing that can say about any human being is that he has no claims on God if he hadn't.

And we'll recognize that he's a candidate for the mercy of God. I read in the 10th chapter of Romans, God is rich unto all who call on him. I tell you that's a precious verse.

After I've read some of the scriptures I've read, and they kind of make me wonder. Oh, I tell you right now, this thing, maybe, maybe, maybe I'd better not be so cocky and be telling God how to run his business. Maybe I'd better just humble myself and say, Lord, here I am on your hand.

I got no claims on you. And I know that if I had any claims on you, then that'd just be justice and there wouldn't be any mercy. And I read some scriptures like that and then I let Paul tell me.

But for God, who is rich in person to all who call on him. And I can preach to men and women that can't deserve salvation and can't buy salvation and can't argue salvation, but bless God, they could become callers. Nothing this side of hell could stop them if they would.

And I read that God is rich toward all who call on him. And I come back and say to men and women, let you be encouraged if God will save a man like the wicked King Manasseh, he wouldn't have any trouble with you. If he save a fellow like Saul of Tarsus who was a persecutor, went around twisting the arms of people trying to get them to blaspheme Christ, he wouldn't have any trouble with you.

Oh, I like to preach the gospel of the glory of God. He gets glory! Glory! By showing mercy to the worst and the wickedest of sinners. There's hope for all.

I never forget a poor fallen woman in Canada. We were out ringing doorbells. Up there, they hadn't had anybody converted in nine years.

They were mighty orthodox, mighty separate, mighty dead. And I kept after them until they began. I said, y'all get acquainted with folks.

And they took me seriously. Twin below zero, and I was going out with the deacon. We was going house to house and other places.

Gotta let something start and other churches in town come and have them dances and the Lord began to overrule. I came to a little wicked gate going up to house and I unlatched the gate. I started to go in and the deacon said, brother preacher, don't go in there.

I said, why not? Oh, he said, I wouldn't want to say it, but don't go in there. I said, why not? Oh, he said, I couldn't tell you, but please don't go in there. I said, well, I'm going.

He said, it'll ruin the meeting. Oh, he said, if you went in there, it'd be terrible. I said, I'm going.

I went and knocked on the door and a nice looking woman, not yet betrayed by her sinful life, came to the door and said, hello big boy. And I said, howdy. I said, I'm a preacher and I'm holding meetings down here at the church and I've come to invite you to come hear me preach tonight.

She began to laugh. I said, it's no joke. I said, I'm preaching here.

Oh, she said, yeah, I've heard about that fella from the south. And you're him. Oh, yes, I said, yeah.

She said, you know who I am? I said, yeah, I've been told. Who they? I said, they tell me you're the most notorious woman in the section of Canada. She said, I guess that's right.

She said, you mean you want me to come up at that church building tonight? I said, I double dog dare you, I cheek dog dare you to come. I said, I need a good shock and I want you to promise me you'll come. And bless God, she did.

She did. I've never seen the Holy Spirit challenged when he didn't knock a home run. And I preached that night.

And before we could get started singing the imitation song, yeah, she came. Just running down to the front fell prostrate down there and just sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. And that's why she stood up tears running down her cheeks.

And she had a great countenance and she witnessed a mighty good confession. And the people, a lot of them were Welsh people out singing as people I've ever heard. They began to just quietly sing Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost but now I'm found. Was blind but now I see. And they had an old 80 year old woman there looked like a spring chicken just as feisty as she could be and she is the mother Israel and I wondered what that nice gang of church members was going to do.

There's that prostitute, ex-prostitute standing there claiming the grace of God had done his work in Christ in her life. Tears running down her cheeks she just stood there while they sang nobody move. And I looked back and I saw that old mother Israel pull her glasses up and wipe her eyes.

And pretty soon she pulled them off took her hat off and white dress. Look at how indifferent she was. Down to the front put her arms around that ex-Magdalene kissed her on both cheeks and loudly enough so the congregation could hear her she said, welcome sister, welcome sister.

Praise God at the foot of the cross objects of the mercy of the best and the worst woman in town in the same crowd. The difference the mercy of God which because his blessed son hung on a cross he's able and willing to show to the worst sinner that ever stayed out of hell a little while mercy God's sovereign mercy. And when that woman did that the heavens were melted and the people's hearts were broken and sinners all over the congregation began to cry out and once again the glory and the wonder of that simple scripture who so ever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Hallelujah. For such a scripture. We're going to stand and give you an opportunity to confess Jesus Christ as your Lord if the spirit of God has spoken to your heart we invite you.

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