

## *Lord, Protect Me from Unsanctified Mercy*

### *Key Scripture*

But once she has nothing, I'll be able to get through to her. I'll entice her and lead her out into the wilderness where we can be alone, and I'll speak right to her heart and try to win her back. And then I'll give her back her vineyards; I'll turn the valley of Achor, that "Valley of Trouble," into a gateway of hope. In the wilderness of exile, she'll learn to respond to Me the way she did when she was young, when I brought her out of Egypt. Hosea 2:14-15 (The Voice)

### *Portion for the Journey*

Compassion and mercy are incredible gifts from God and are aspects of godly character. Godly compassion must be joined by godly wisdom and truth. We are not to be moved by our feelings but by obedience to the Father. Jesus said He only did what He saw the Father doing. When we are motivated to act by 'feelings' of compassion or mercy arising from the flesh and not the leading of the Holy Spirit, we are acting in unsanctified mercy. Truth is an essential part of true mercy and must be guided by the Holy Spirit. Truth should be earthy and humble. The root of humility is "humus" which is the dark, organic material in soil that makes it fruitful. Phil. 1:9-11 (AMP); Ps. 85:10-11; Prov. 24:26; Prov. 16:6; Ps. 25:10; Prov. 2:3; Ps. 89:14

God's mercy is a precious aspect of His character that exemplifies His relationship with mankind. Shortly after God established His Covenant with Israel, He gave Moses detailed instructions for building the ark of the covenant. The mercy seat would cover the ark and the LORD said, "There I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandments for the sons of Israel." Ex. 25:17, 22 The mercy seat represents the throne of God, the place where God chose to meet with Moses. Initially, it was outside the veil because only the High Priest entered behind the veil once a year. Lev. 16:13 instructed that a cloud of incense (representing the prayers of men and women) shall cover the mercy seat and the blood of the offering was sprinkled on the mercy seat. Num. 7:89 "Now when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony from between the two cherubim, so He spoke to him." His mercy allows us to be saved and come into intimate fellowship with our LORD and Savior. It was at the mercy seat covered with the blood of the sacrifice that Moses interceded for Israel when they sinned. Ex. 33:11

The concept of mercy is often simplified in our understanding to "not receiving the wrath and punishment that we deserve." There are four Hebrew words for mercy in the Old Testament. Each one offers additional insight into God's character and ways that help us understand His mercy.

1. 'racham' (Strong's #7356) translated mercy or compassion. Representing the womb as nourishing and cherishing the fetus and compassion that speaks of great and tender love. To love, to cherish, to soothe, with the primary idea lying in a gentle emotion of the mind. A damsel, female. The inner parts, as the seat of gentle affections. So God the Father, strong and mighty, is also gentle like a mother. Favor, mercy. Ps. 111:4; 78:38; 86:15; 112:4; 145:8; 18:1; Ex. 33:19; Isa. 66:13-14; Job 24:20; Ps. 40:11; Hos. 2:23

2. 'chesed' (Strong's #2617) translated mercy or goodliness or faithfulness. Translated mercy or kindness, reproof, favor, goodliness. Unfailing love, kindness and tenderness, faithfulness. Used 248 times in 241 verses in OT. Micah 6:8; Ps. 136

3. 'chanan' (Strong's # 2603) translated mercy or grace. To show favor, be gracious, make favorable, to be shown consideration, to seek favor. Ps. 4:1

4. 'kapporeth' (Strong's #3727) translated 'mercy seat' which is the place of atonement, reconciliation between God and His people. Used only in reference to the mercy seat. It means 'to cover over, make atonement for sin, to purge, to cleanse, appease, pardon, to cancel, disannul, reconciliation.

### *Digging Deeper in the Word*

**A Picture of God's Mercy:** Read Luke 15:11-32

The Parable of the Prodigal Son provides a great deal of insight in God's mercy and His ways when leading one to repentance. One of those principles is that He withdraws physical and human support so that we will cry out and return to Him. In the case of the prodigal son, we see that he was forced to suffer the consequences of his own actions. In asking for half of his estate while his dad was still living, he demonstrates a huge sense of entitlement. He thought only of himself and his own desires.

vs. 13 *He squandered his possessions in prodigal living.* Most people thinks the word prodigal means "a wayward person who has fallen or one who returns" but the word actually refers to a lifestyle of wastefulness and extravagant spending. Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines "prodigal" as one given to extravagant expenditures, expending money or other things without necessity, profuse, lavish, wasteful. Not frugal or economical. Excessiveness, a waster, a spend thrift. Strong's #811 defines 'prodigal' as riotous, dissolutely (luxurious, wanton, licentious, festive indulgences, without restraint, debauchery. 1 Pet 4:1-5; Prov. 3:9-12

vs. 14 *"...there arose a severe famine in that land."* There was a famine in the land. Famine and drought are often present in times of God's testing, chastisement and judgment. Famine and drought strike first at the most basic physical needs for life. Man is completely dependent upon God in this area for apart from Him, nothing can live in the absence of His life giving water.

vs. 14 *"...he came to be in severe want."* It was part of God's plan to help him see the consequences of his sinful lifestyle and to begin to take responsibility for his own actions. There was no one that he could blame. Had his belongings been stolen or destroyed by fire or flood, he might have played the victim, but in this case we know he had wastefully lost everything he had.

vs. 15 *"He joined himself to a citizen in the land, a breeder of swine."* The word for "joined" means literally, 'glued himself or imposed.' In the Old Testament, Israel often turned to Egypt in time of trouble during times of their rebellion against God. Man will almost always turn to other people when he is in rebellion to God to seek help. There is a deeper significance to the prodigal son's actions than first meets the eye. He joined himself to a Gentile farmer who raised pigs, this is prohibited by God's

laws to Israel). Initially we see his sin against his father and their relationship in taking his inheritance and squandering it on himself. Now we see his rebellion against God and His laws.

Vs. 16 “...No one gave him anything.” There was no one to rescue him from his troubles. It is important that we pray and ask the Lord for wisdom so we know when to “rescue” someone or when God is working through their trials. When God sought to bring Gomer back to Himself, He used a similar strategy, stating “no one will rescue her out of My hand.” God said, therefore “I will allure her, bring her into the wilderness and speak kindly to her, and I will give her her vineyards from there and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope.” The word “Achor” is defined in Strong’s #5911 as, ‘to trouble, to roil, fig. to disturb, trouble, afflict or stir.’ Hos. 2:10, 14-17; Isa. 26:16; Ps. 107, esp. vs. 12; Ps. 109:12; Ps. 22:1-5

It was then that he came to his senses or came to himself, and he arose and returned to his father. The work the LORD did in his heart was very deep, for he recognized his sin against God and against his father and returned with a truly repentant heart. In true repentance we see sorrow for sin, confession that the sin has been committed against a holy God, and a change of heart that is manifested in a change of action. The chastening of the LORD produces a blessing in those lives who have been trained by it. Heb. 12:11, Isa. 26:9-10

God took the Prodigal Son through a series of troubles to bring him to the end of his own ways, and to cause him to “return to his senses and repent.” This is a pattern that is demonstrated in the Word;

- **2 Timothy 2:24-26** also speaks of the need for one to return to their senses and the process by which this takes place: vs. 24 “the Lord’s bond servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition ...If perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth... and they may come to their senses... The phrase “come to their senses” is translated from the Greek word “ananepho” (Strong’s #366) which means that they may recover themselves, to return to soberness, to regain one’s sense of self. Nepho means to be sober, calm and collected in spirit, to be temperate, abstain from wine, discreet. (It is also translated “to walk circumspectly” in Eph. 5:15.) ...and escape the snare of the devil, having been held captive to do his will...
- **Hosea 2:10-17 (VOICE) 10** The land will be stripped bare, and this unfaithful wife of Mine will be walking around Embarrassingly naked in the sight of her lovers, and none of them will be able to rescue her from Me. 11 So I’m going to end all of her celebrations now that she uses them to honor other masters—Her pilgrimage festivals, her new moon celebrations, her Sabbath feasts, and all her other gatherings. 12 She says she’s entitled to her vines and fig trees because they’re her wages from prostitution; they’re gifts from her lovers. But I’m going to destroy them all. I’ll turn them into a tangle of brush, and wild animals will eat up the fruit. 13 I swear that I’ll punish her for honoring other masters[a] on My special days, even her burning incense to those false gods. She got dressed up in her rings and jewelry; she went after her lovers, and she forgot about Me. 14 But once she has nothing, I’ll be able to get through to her. I’ll entice her and lead her out into the wilderness where we can be alone, and I’ll speak right to her heart and try to win her back. 15 And then I’ll give her back her vineyards; I’ll turn

the valley of Achor, that “Valley of Trouble,” into a gateway of hope. In the wilderness of exile, she’ll learn to respond to Me the way she did when she was young, when I brought her out of Egypt. 16 And I swear when that day comes, she’ll call Me “my husband” and never address Me again as “my master” as she did those other gods. 17 She’ll never invoke the name of any other master again. Everyone will forget that gods by that name ever existed.

### **Characteristics of unsanctified mercy:**

One of the most descriptive pictures of unsanctified mercy appears in the exchange between Jesus and Peter. It is sobering to see how easily one can become a tool of the enemy when we allow our love and mercy to operate through the flesh rather than the Spirit. Matthew 16:21-27 and Mark 8:27-38 describe Jesus warning His disciples that He would go to Jerusalem, the city where animals were brought for sacrifice. He would suffer many things at the hands of the elders and chief priests, be killed and raised up on the third day. Mark tells us He was speaking plainly or graphically of these things. Peter was undoubtedly shaken by these stark predictions because the disciples were still hoping this King they followed would free Israel from Rome. Peter took Him aside, rebuked Him and said, “This will not happen!” It is very interesting that Jesus did not respond to Peter, but to Satan. Note the insights we can gain regarding unsanctified mercy from this account:

1. Unsanctified mercy places us in a position to be used by the enemy for his purposes and contrary to the purposes of God for that person’s life . Erwin Lutzer notes in reference to Peter’s declaration to Jesus, “The voice of hate and the voice of misguided love were in unison.”
2. Jesus stated that this was a stumblingblock. Peter had unknowingly set a satanic snare for Jesus. A stumblingblock is the small part upon which bait is set in order to spring a trap. We know, from the Garden of Gethsamene that what lay ahead was not an easy road, even for the Son of God. Peter’s words just made this path harder!
3. Unsanctified mercy seeks bypass the cross and to relieve God-ordained suffering.
4. Unsanctified mercy can stand in the way of another’s call to obedience.
5. Jesus said, ‘You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’ He contrasts the interests of God, the supreme ruler of all things with the interests of mere man. To “set the mind” (Strong’s # 5426) is to have understanding and wisdom from God, to be of the same mind, ie. To agree together, to cherish the same views, to be harmonious with one another. Unsanctified mercy views the situation from man’s perspective, not God’s.

### **Additional aspects of unsanctified mercy:**

- Unsanctified mercy can occur when love becomes an idol. It often takes place when we love people, places or things too much and for the wrong reasons. Our loyalty to people can cause us to move into unsanctified mercy and idolatry.
- Unsanctified mercy may result in withholding the truth when it is felt it won’t be received well. It causes us to compromise the truth in order to please the individual. This can come at the cost of an individual not receiving their need for repentance and surrender to God’s will as a

necessity for salvation. Those who walk in unsanctified mercy often accuse those who speak truth as being “religious” or “judgmental.”

- Unsanctified mercy is a work of the flesh and as such is a dead work. Dead works would be defined as works that are not initiated by God or empowered by Him to carry out. Dead works cannot accomplish the purposes of God and will produce no lasting fruit. Heb 6:1-4
- Unsanctified Mercy often propels us to intervene and extend mercy that prevents a person from experiencing God’s discipline or chastening which is intended to bring them to repentance. There are times when God does not want us to intervene in a person’s trials. These are times when our compassion is at cross purposes to God’s discipline. Unsanctified mercy often takes place when the “rescuer” does not understand God’s ways of chastening or discipline. God may be bringing a person through times of troubles as a means of disciplining them in order to bring the person to the end of their ways. Unsanctified mercy intervenes to “protect” the person and circumvent God’s working. We need to pray before rescuing people before they realize they need God. Unsanctified mercy can cause a person to stay in their sin without to experiencing the consequences of it.
- Unsanctified mercy arises when fear of man is greater than our fear of the LORD. Or when our compassion becomes compromised by our fear of offending man rather than God. We subvert biblical truth when we put man’s needs ahead of God’s plans and His will for the person.
- Unsanctified mercy is a presumptuous sin rooted in pride. Presumption is also translated insolence. It means ‘arrogance, wanton, rebelliously, to boil or act in a proud manner of self-importance. Three specific aspects of this type of pride: 1) pride that presumes too much in one’s favor, especially in the sense of authority. 2) rebellion or disobedience in asserting one’s will over another. 3) Element of willful decision. David asked to be cleansed from will full or deliberate sin, but to be protected from presumptuous sin. Ps. 19:12-14; Prov. 13:10
- It is very easy to be tempted to offer unsanctified mercy to our children. With unsanctified mercy we tend to put their “wants” or “happiness” ahead of development of their character and integrity. Putting our children first, ahead of obedience to the Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit is an indication of idolatry. The LORD consistently teaches us to instruct our children in the way of the Lord and to discipline them. If we do not discipline our children, we cannot possibly understand the loving Fatherheart of God who disciplines those He loves. Prov. 13:24, 19:1b; 20:30; 22:6; 22:15; 23:23; 29:15.
- Unsanctified mercy often originates in sentimentalism or feelings. Sentimental love is not in alignment with God’s agape love because it often seeks to satisfy what people want, not what they need. Allows people to do what they want, not what they need. God’s agape love is characterized by giving people what they need, not what they necessarily want.
- Unsanctified mercy can ensnare us in unhealthy relationships that tear us down spiritually.
- Unsanctified mercy often overlooks or minimizes sin in another rather than to confront or correct the person’s sin. What is an affront to God’s holiness should be an affront to us as well.
- Unsanctified mercy uses the phrase, “don’t judge” out of context because it avoids discerning between good and evil and the need to be separate from the world in holiness.

- Unsanctified mercy comes from our own identity rather than finding our identity in Jesus as an expression of His nature and character. It gives us a feeling of satisfaction to help others and boosts our sense of worth.
- Unsanctified mercy: we act on our own and we can be at cross purposes to God's purposes
- Truth is an essential part of true mercy. We operate in unsanctified mercy if we withhold the truth when we know it will not be received well. This may be at the cost of this person not realizing their relationship with God and possible eternal life is at stake.

### **How do we recognize and avoid the traps of falling into unsanctified mercy?**

1. Pray and ask God for His wisdom, discernment and guidance. When we feel compassion rise up within us or we feel "sorry" for another person's plight, we need to ask the LORD if He wants us to intervene. We need to realize there may be someone better equipped to answer the call or God may be doing something in their life that would be hindered by our presence in the situation.

Example: My sister's husband was addicted to drugs and alcohol. When he drank, he was physically abusive to his family. He often took every penny they had for groceries and basic needs to use for drugs. He was arrested on a minor charge but was sentenced to spend 6 months in jail. My sister saw God's hand on this because it would give him a place where he was safe and protected from access to drugs and alcohol. The family was safe. She also was thankful this would give her the opportunity to get their finances in order. A good person who did not know her husband heard of his sentence and felt sorry for him that he would not be with his family at Christmas. He paid the fines needed to have him released immediately. What he did not realize was the family had no Christmas that year because my brother-in-law used all of the money they had to feed his addiction.

2. Jesus did only what He saw the Father doing. We need to study "God's ways" and understand His ways in discipline, chastisement and judgment. We also need to understand His call us to stand in the gap as intercessors, praying and getting His direction before "intervening."

3. Will our intervention result in taking more responsibility for the other person's spiritual growth than they are willing to invest themselves? Is the person willing to take responsibility to do what they can to help their situation? We are to "bear one another's burdens" but each person is required to "examine their own work" and "carry their own load." Phil. 2:12-13; Gal. 6:1-5 (Compare instructions in Gal. 6:1 with 2 Tim. 2:24-26.)

Burden is Baros (Strong's 922) weight, load, abundance, anything demanding resources or which presses physically, materially or spiritually. Something which will likely cause its bearer to faint along the way, incapacitating him in his pilgrimages. Romans 15:1

Load is 'phortion' (Strong's 5413) a task, service, or burden. NT figurative of Christ's commands for personal holiness, something carried as part of our discipleship. The obligations Christ lays upon His disciples which are "light" compared to the weight of the Pharisees requirements. Our load in Christ should be considered light (not too difficult to bear). A load is something that cannot be carried by

another on our behalf. For example, we each have to be responsible to confess and repent for our own sins, to spend time in the Words, to seek to grow in our application of the Word. Matt. 11:30; 23:4

4. Will our intervention or assistance cover or condone a sin pattern?

5. Examine yourself for areas of fear of man. We are likely to be snared into unsanctified mercy if we seek to please people or have a desire to be needed. Fear of man can also include a fear of being rejected by people if we do not please them. This is a particular snare for many parents who seek to be “friends” with their children. Do you have a hard time saying “no”?

6. Is the enemy able to manipulate you into assuming the role of Savior or Messiah? In this case we are tempted to take responsibility beyond that which God calls us to assume. We can have an overly developed sense of responsibility for others not given by the Holy Spirit.

7. Does our intervention or assistance of mercy cause us to take actions that may be contrary to the Scriptures? Ex. Borrowing money for a friend when Proverbs directs us to avoid becoming surety for a neighbor.

8. Is it God’s timing for His intervention. Sometimes people need to become ready to receive from others and to benefit from the support. What may be appropriate intervention when ministering to a baby Christian might not be appropriate when they should be moving to maturity. As a believer, we are to grow in our relationship with the LORD and develop a firm root in ourselves. A dependency on others to meet their spiritual needs may hinder their growth. Eph. 4:14-15;

9. We need to be cautious of those individuals who appear to be “stuck” in a mentality in which they use other people to meet needs that are at cross purposes to their own spiritual growth. Unsanctified mercy will inadvertently allow them to remain in fleshly states. Ask the LORD to help you respond to victim, entitlement or attention seeking behaviors that seek to make you a partner in their sinful patterns.

10. Does this person have the pattern of continual asking for help but leave the other person drained spiritually, emotionally or physically? Prov. 30:15 describes the leech who has two daughters, “give, give.” The Hebrew word for ‘leech’ is aluwqah (Strong’s # 5936): a horseleech, meaning “to suck.” A leech is a parasite that sustains its life by latching onto a host and literally sucks the life blood from the other. It provides a graphic picture of a person who clings to another to exploit for personal gain, especially without giving anything in return, and usually with the implication or effect of exhausting the other’s resources.

11. Ask yourself if you are being led by the Holy Spirit or by the spirit that may be in that other person? God does not interrupt Himself. Satan can use unsanctified mercy to distract or disrupt us in completing His calling or fulfilling our true path. Ex. Prayer vs. pop bottles. Prayer for the City, prayer for the individual. Neh. 6:3

12. Ask yourself if coming to the aid of this individual will lead you into sin or cause you to cross boundaries and guidelines for safely ministering to others? If God has not equipped you to be the one

to minister, ask the LORD to bring them to the right ministry or the who called to work with this person.  
Example: It is not wise for men to minister to women and vice versa. This can lead to an unnatural dependence or sinful relationship.

*What is God Speaking to Your Heart?*

*What is your Response to God?*