

## Searching the Scriptures / 53 / Mercy Is Not Getting What We Deserve / Part 3

We said in a previous lesson that “*mercy is not receiving the punishment deserved.*” So, today let’s explore that idea further by considering these two points:

### 1. What Do We Deserve?

### 2. No Mercy without Judgment

#### What Do We Deserve?

Because God cursed the human race with death, we all deserve eternal damnation under the wrath of God because of our sins. These two verses in Romans clearly explain man’s predicament: Rom 3:23 “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*” Rom 6:23 “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” The “*glory of God*” refers to eternal life (Heaven), and “*death*” means eternal punishment (Hell). The “*wicked*” in Psa 9:17 are all those from all the nations of the world who are unsaved on Judgment Day: “*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*”

When the Prophet Isaiah saw the holiness and majesty of Almighty God, he cried out in Isa 6:5: “*... Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*” God had confronted Isaiah with the true condition of his soul, and the prophet was terrified by the despicable nature of his sins. God uses that kind of godly fear as He draws His chosen people to Himself for salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ admonishes all of us with these words in Luke 12:4-5, “*And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him [God], which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*”

Only those whose names are written in the “*Lamb’s book of life*” (Rev 21:27) will be spared the eternal anguish of Hell, which is figuratively called the “*lake of fire*” in Rev 20:15, “*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*” Remember that references to “*fire*” and “*smoke*” in the Bible are often used to symbolize the wrath of God.

#### No Mercy without Judgment

Eternal God is a God of Law, and the Bible is His Law Book. God created the universe and established His physical, moral, and spiritual laws according to His infinite wisdom and sovereign will. He enforces His rules for His righteous purposes and for His glory according to His standards of perfect justice. Every sin we commit is a transgression of God’s Law, as we read in 1 John 3:4, “*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*” Therefore, every sin is a crime against God that must be adjudicated in a court of law; and the Judge in that court is none other than God Himself, in the Person of Jesus Christ, as John 5:22 declares, “*For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.*”

However, before God will send anyone to Hell that person must be tried and found guilty of committing a crime. Sadly for us all, a guilty verdict is certain, as James 2:10 states: “*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend*

*in one point, he is guilty of all.*” Thus, the sentence (or judgment) for breaking only one of God’s laws is “*death*”, or eternal Hell.

So, where does mercy come into the picture? Well, if there were no laws, there would be no crimes, no punishments, and, therefore, no need for mercy. However, the reality is that there are God’s Laws and, consequently, there are crimes, sentences (or “*judgments*”), and God’s mercy. God’s Laws are a reflection of His righteousness, and God has bound Himself to execute judgment righteously. That means there can be no “*plea bargains*” and no “*pardons*” at the Judgment Seat of Christ – the penalty for sin must be paid.

But God, by His grace, love, and mercy, did pay the penalty of eternal damnation for His people through the atoning work of Jesus Christ at the cross. The Lord Jesus Christ was made sin and became a curse as He poured out His life – that is, His soul – for those whom He came to save. Now, that is the greatest act of mercy in the history of the world.

In Luke 22:42 and 44 we get some idea of the magnitude of Christ’s spiritual agony in the Garden of Gethsemane as the Father poured out the “*cup*” of His wrath upon the Son: “... *Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done... And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*” Jesus’ continued to suffer as He was tortured and crucified the following day, and we get a glimpse of the horror of being “*forsaken*” by God forevermore as He cried out in Mat 27:46, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*”