

## Mercy

By Wendell Yeary

Matthew 9:13 reads, *"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

We usually read this verse out of context, which the rules of Bible study warn us not to do. In this verse, taken by itself, it seems that Jesus is saying He desires to give mercy rather than receive or require a sacrifice from us. Jesus is quoting Hosea 6:6, *"For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."*

In Hosea, God is telling us that Israel had turned away from Him. You can read about this in the following verses: Hosea 4:1-13, *"Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: 'There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint, With bloodshed upon bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn; And everyone who dwells there will waste away With the beasts of the field And the birds of the air; Even the fish of the sea will be taken away. 'Now let no man contend, or rebuke another; For your people are like those who contend with the priest. Therefore you shall stumble in the day; The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night; And I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. 'The more they increased, The more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of My people; They set their heart on their iniquity. And it shall be: like people, like priest. So I will punish them for their ways, And reward them for their deeds. For they shall eat, but not have enough; They shall commit harlotry, but not increase; Because they have ceased obeying the LORD. 'Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart. My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, And their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, And they have played the harlot against their God. They offer sacrifices on the mountaintops, And burn incense on the hills, Under oaks, poplars, and terebinths, Because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters commit harlotry, And your brides commit adultery.'"*

Hosea 5:1-7,15, *"Hear this, O priests! Take heed, O house of Israel! Give ear, O house of the king! For yours is the judgment, Because you have been a snare to Mizpah And a net spread on Tabor. The revolters are deeply involved in slaughter, Though I rebuke them all. I know Ephraim, And Israel is not hidden from Me; For now, O Ephraim, you commit harlotry; Israel is defiled. 'They do not direct their deeds Toward turning to their God, For the spirit of harlotry is in their midst, And they do not know the LORD. The pride of Israel testifies to his face; Therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them. 'With their flocks and herds They shall go to seek the LORD, But they will not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them. They have dealt treacherously with the LORD, For they have begotten pagan children. Now a New Moon shall devour them and their heritage.'" Verse 15, "I will return again to My place Till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me."*

In Hosea 6:4-7 we read, *"O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, And like the early dew it goes away. Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth; And your judgments are like light that goes forth. For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the*

knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. "But like men they transgressed the covenant; There they dealt treacherously with Me."

Isaiah 1:1-4, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: 'I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me; The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider.' Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward." Verses 10-16, "Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. "When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies-- I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil," Verses 18-20, "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

In all these scriptures God is telling us that we cannot pay for our sins. God and Christ have already taken care of this. But we must repent and accept it. We are not given a green light to sin and live a lawless life, even though we sin from time to time. We are told to be perfect as our Father is perfect, in Matthew 5:48, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Now, let's read Matthew 9:13 in context. I believe there is an added meaning here. Let's begin reading verse 9: "As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Jesus was telling the Pharisees, and you and I that we need to go to those living in sin. He calls them sick. We are the messengers for the great Physician. We have God's Holy Spirit, we have His commission, and we have what He says here, and so many other verses.

We must remember two things; one God is a God of love and justice. We are told that God is a God of love in 1 John 4:7-9, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."

We can read that God is a God of justice in Psalm 89:14, *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face.”* And in Isaiah 30:18, *“Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him.”* These are just a few verses that tell us this.

We can see the love of God and His justice in the way He had to deal with the nation of Israel, who He was working with to spread His message to the world. They turned away from Him so many times that He finally turned His face from them, and now He is working through the church, the body of Christ to spread His gospel to the world. The nation of Israel will get their chance for salvation after the second resurrection.

The Church today must stay the course because we do have God’s Holy Spirit in us, and to walk away, as the Israelites did.

Paul warns of a falling away from the faith in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, *“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,”*

To fall away is turning our back on God, walking away, which would lead us to blaspheming the Holy Spirit, which is the unpardonable sin.

Here are some verses that warn us about not blaspheming the Holy Spirit: Hebrews 6:4-6, *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.”*

Hebrews 10:26-27, *“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.”*

2 Peter 2:20-22, *“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: “A dog returns to his own vomit, “and” a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”*

To be truly converted, we must have God’s Holy Spirit as it says in Romans 8:9, *“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”*

The church of God is made up of those who have the Holy Spirit in them.

We can read that the Church is being judged now in 1 Peter 4:17, *“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”*

Knowing this, the Apostle Paul tells us to accurately handle the Word of God in 2 Timothy 2:15, *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

This is a warning telling us that the church needs to take the Bible seriously. END