

## Teaching Our Children About the Mercy of God

*“But God, being rich in mercy...made us alive together with Christ”*

I was out riding bicycles with my two sons about two years ago, as we do most every evening in the Spring and Summer. We rode down the street, across the dirt and went to a friend's house. My boys rang the doorbell and our friends' children came out played.

After some time playing baseball, my two sons started bickering and fighting with each other and with their friends. I told them to stop, and after a momentary improvement in behavior, they quickly went back to disobeying me. I told them to get on their bikes, to pedal quickly home and I assured them that discipline awaited them. It was a quiet, somber trip back to the house!

The three of us went into their room. They knew what was coming. Their eager attempts of promising improved behavior and their desperate explanations of how nothing was their fault were quickly halted. I told them that I wanted them to listen and I would do all the talking.

I told them that they were wrong in their behavior and that they knew they were wrong. They agreed. I told them that such behavior deserved punishment and they said they understood. Then I surprised them. I told my two sons that I wanted to teach them about mercy...they didn't understand what I meant, but they were curious.

I explained to them how we are all sinners and have all messed up. I told them how the Bible teaches us that our sin brings judgment upon us and that we are deserving of death and separation from God. Then, I taught them Ephesians 2:4-5 which says, “But God, ***being rich in mercy***, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).” I tried to explain to my sons that the mercy of God is His withholding from us what we deserved. I told them how I am a sinner, worthy of punishment from God, but God was merciful to me, withheld from me what I deserved and He forgave me.

Then came the shocking news. I told them I wanted them to experience mercy so they would understand better what it means to know the mercy of the Lord. And so...I gave them mercy. I withheld from them the punishment their actions warranted. There would be no spanking and their sin would be forgiven. ***Needless to say, they loved mercy!***

Now, if I wanted to complete the picture for them, I could have said that because I withheld their punishment that it needed to fall on someone. I could have had them discipline me (the guilty punishing the innocent). That is what God did for us. We, who were undeniably guilty of sin, were given mercy and our sins forgiven. Yet, our sin still had to be punished and so, God sent forth His only Son, Jesus Christ, to take our punishment. The Bible says in Isaiah 53:5, speaking prophetically of Jesus, that “*He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him and by His wounds we are healed.*” Amazing...the holy taking on our sin so that the guilty could take on His holiness. What a Savior!

By the way, about two weeks later my sons found themselves in trouble again. And again we made our way into their room. Just before the punishment was handed out, one of my sons

said, "Daddy, any chance you are going to teach us about mercy again?". I said, "No son, today we will learn about justice" (nice try!).

May you be blessed today as you think about the mercies of God and how lovingly He has dealt with your sins and enabled His children to be forgiven and restored!

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