

MERCY AND LOVING-KINDNESS OF THE LORD

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless His holy name;
Bless the Lord, O my soul; and forget not all His benefits-
Who forgives all your iniquities; Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from the pit and corruption;
Who beautifies and dignifies and crowns you with **loving-kindness**
And **tender mercy**; Who satisfies your life with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle (Ps. 103:1-5).

Living the spiritual life, perceiving the Lord's faithfulness in His mercy and loving kindness is to express gratitude all day long. In the midst of our trials and pains, in the midst of sorrows and diseases, the song remains, His mercy and loving kindness endure forever; I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, my fortress; in Him I will trust (Ps. 91). The greatness of the mercy of the Lord is shown in the broken body of our Lord, when stricken with many blows to heal us; when He was hanging on the cross, connecting heaven and earth, reconciling God and men. But it did not stop there. His mercy and loving kindness continued in the person of His Holy Spirit, Who is in each one of us believers until the end. Overlooking the trials and pains that come our way, instead, concentrating on the mercy and loving kindness of the Lord is to agree with Him that He is faithful at all times. There is a point in time for all of us to exercise our faith through difficulties.

The writer of the book of Lamentations although, reflecting upon the horror he witnessed in the calamity that had befallen Jerusalem, had words that recognized God's mercy and loving kindness, and words that call us to accept God's corrections. He said, ... He has filled me with bitterness; He has made me drink to excess and until drunken with wormwood; He has also broken my teeth with gravel; He has covered me with ashes; and You have bereaved my soul and cast it off far from peace; I have forgotten what good and happiness are and I say, Perished is my strength and my expectation from the Lord. O Lord, remember my affliction and my misery, my wandering and my outcast state, the wormwood and the gall; my soul has them continually in remembrance and is bowed within me. But this I recall and therefore have I hope and expectation: It is because of the **Lord's mercy and loving-kindness** that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not; **they are new every morning**; great and abundant is Your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion or share, says my living being; therefore, will I hope in Him and wait expectantly for Him; the Lord is good to those who wait hopefully and expectantly for Him, to those who seek Him (Lam. 3:15-25).

When our Lord's hands were stretched out on that cross for six hours, suffering the punishment that was due us, suffering mockery from those He was dying for, He did not open His mouth; in silence of the agony of His soul, He directed to His Father and cried, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Yes, that was the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord falling on us in the midst of His cruelest moment and then His final words resounded throughout heaven, throughout the world and under it for His enemy to hear: IT IS FINISHED! Men are now purchased for God,

that is, those who will believe in Him. Heaven rejoiced, while earth still sleeping, still in its ignorance and blindness, could not participate in the joy heaven was expressing. Three words of victory changed the destiny of mankind. Webster's dictionary describes the words mercy and loving-kindness as to refrain from harming or punishing offenders, enemies – forbearance and compassion, disposition to forgive- the power to forgive or be kind; loving-kindness is kindness or affectionate behavior resulting from or expressing love. Examples we see is the case of the thief on the cross and in YAHSHUA'S prayer of forgiveness for those who were crucifying Him: 'Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.' Mercy expressed through His prayer carried its meaning to the hearts of those who heard and believed.

His mercy and loving-kindness are renewed each morning for all of us. It is good to remember that, when our soul awakes to the new day. It is a blessing worthy to consider first thing as part of the new day He allowed us to have. The psalmist in Psalm 107 said, O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy and loving-kindness endure forever! Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and loving-kindness and His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with good; ...He raises the poor and needy from affliction and makes their families like a flock; the upright shall see it and be glad. Whose is wise will observe and heed these things; and they will diligently consider the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord (Ps. 107).

Each of us has experienced the Lord's mercy and loving-kindness many times, although not aware of them. Life, as it is, seems to be taken for granted, without realizing that is because of the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord that we are not destroyed. He gives us air to breathe, sustaining life we enjoy; He displays His compassion in His disposition to forgive us; His love is expressed through His affectioned behavior toward men, who deserve nothing but His judgment. We are so rich, yet so poor, because we do not know God as per His attributes displayed in our favor. Remember when Adam and Eve sinned, He did not condemn them eternally but promised them a Redeemer- His own Son. He could have then finished with Adam and Eve and that would be the end of them. But our God is merciful, loving and kind; He is ever compassionate and long-suffering; forgiving and good and faithful. Nothing will change His character, not the vilest of men is able to do so. Instead, His love will be greater for them. Men in his mind is limited to comprehend and absorb His love; for that reason, they reject Him and all that He represents. Miserable that they are, in their sinful estate, they miss blessings upon blessings right before their eyes offered by our Lord. He does not send rain only upon the righteous; but all is benefitted from it. The Israelites, of all people, experienced first hand the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord. God liberated them from slavery and formed a nation like no other nation in this world. As He guided them through the desert, He blessed them with His presence going before them. God's mercy and loving-kindness spoke loudly through miracles and more miracles while the people murmured against Him. Yet, amidst many being left dead in the desert for their rebellion, He did not make a complete end of them. Underserving of His blessings, Israel did not understand God's love and purpose for them. Instead, they craved the delicacies they had left behind in the land of slavery.

“Long-suffering and slow to anger, abundant in mercy and loving-kindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression,” always giving a second chance to the transgressor, the Lord takes pleasure in redeeming us. The earth is full of the loving-kindness of the Lord (Ps. 119:64). In everything we see, and experience that is good, He is the Author of it. In spite of it, men despised and rejected and forsook Him, even though, He carried our sorrows and pains, and was acquainted with our grief and sickness; He was wounded for our iniquities, and guilt; He took upon Himself our punishment. The psalmist said, I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known His faithfulness to all generations (Ps. 89:1). How about you and me? Don’t we owe to the Lord our devotion and recognition of His love for us? Rejoice with me, my friend, for our God is good all the time.