

MERCY FOR THE MISERABLE

EZEKIEL 16:1-6 • TV-043B

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By
HENRY T. MAHAN

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Zebulon Grace Church
6088 Zebulon Highway
Pikeville, KY 41501
PH: 606-631-9053

Ezekiel 16:1-6

“Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.”

We’re going to look at the book of **Ezekiel, chapter 16:1-14.**

I’m speaking to you on the subject: **“MERCY FOR THE MISERABLE OR GRACE FOR THE GUILTY.”**

Now, a lot of people don’t understand this, but the Old Testament is full of parables and illustrations showing how God saves sinners. That’s right, God’s mercy for the miserable. God’s grace to the guilty through His Son Jesus Christ is the theme of the Old Testament.

When our Lord was preaching, when our Lord was here on this earth preaching, He constantly referred to the Old Testament. He said; *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even*

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so, must the Son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

He said again; *“As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth.”* And again He said; *“As it was in the days of Noah so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of man.”*

Christ constantly referred back to the Old Testament illustrating redemption, salvation, how God saves sinners. Paul did the same thing. Paul and Peter, James and John, constantly referred to the Old Testament.

And if we were wise we would become acquainted with these types and pictures of our Lord in the Old Testament because, *“Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.”*

Now; I’m going to read a rather long passage of Scripture. I wish you’d take your Bible and turn to **Ezekiel 16** and let me read the first six verses as I speak to you on the subject: **“MERCY FOR THE MISERABLE.”**

“Again, the Word of the Lord came to me saying, Son of man; cause Jerusalem to know her abominations or her sins and say, Thus saith the Lord God to Jerusalem; your birth and your nativity is of the land of Canaan.”

“Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. And when you were born, as for your nativity, in the day you were born, your navel was not cut, neither were you washed in water nor salted, nor suppled, nor swaddled.”

“None eye pitied thee to do any of these things for thee; but thou wast cast out in the day thy was born. Thy was cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day thy was born. And when I passed by thee and saw thee polluted in thy blood I said to thee when thou was polluted in thy blood; I said to thee, Live.”

Now my friend; we’re not left to wonder about the first application of this story. It was the custom among some of the heathen nations back many centuries ago; it was the custom to take unwanted children, unwanted newborn babes, infants, deformed, or unwanted, right after they were born and just throw them out in the field or out in the desert to be devoured by a wild beast or eaten by birds.

They didn’t want these babies. So, just as soon as they were born they were just cast out into the field. And that’s the picture here. The Lord said, “Son of man; you speak this message to Jerusalem, to Israel.”

This is a picture of God’s dealings with Israel. This is the way God found them. He describes it like it’s a baby, a newborn baby, not washed, and not swaddled, and not cleaned up, his navel not even taken care of, just thrown into the field and left there polluted in its blood.

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And God said, “*When I passed by you and saw you in that condition; it was a time of love and I loved you and I said to you; live, when you were polluted in your blood, to the loathing of your person I said to you, live.*” And He said, “Son of man; this is Jerusalem.” Now this is the way God found Israel.

Did you know Abraham and his father were idolaters when God called Abraham? And Almighty God made them His own, He loved them, and He gave them His glory. He gave them the prophets. He gave them the law. He gave them the kings, He gave them His Son.

And their fame and their beauty, the fame of Israel and the beauty of Israel went to the uttermost parts of the world and everybody knew about their beauty and their glory. And He said, “*You were beautiful in my comeliness which I gave unto you.*” Now that’s the first application.

But as in all Scripture; (now listen to this) as in all Scripture God’s dealings with national Israel is a picture of God’s dealings with spiritual Israel. That’s right! Anytime that you read some Scripture about God’s dealings with national Israel it’s a picture of God dealing with you and me in mercy and grace, how God saves sinners.

Now, if we have eyes we will be able to see that here. If we have ears we will be able to hear it. If we have a heart to understand, if the Holy Spirit enlightens our hearts; we will be able to see the mysteries of God’s grace and God’s goodness to you and to me in this Scripture.

As you go back through the Old Testament, the rock that Moses smote, the Scripture says in the New Testament; that rock was Christ and that Passover Lamb that was slain and blood put on the door; that Passover Lamb is Christ.

And this picture here; God didn’t take all of this space in His Word just to tell us about a parable about Israel and an account of His mercy to them. This is applicable to you and to me. This is the way God found us.

Now let’s go back and look:

First of all: Let’s see our lost condition in this parable and in this picture!

The baby was born wrong. That’s where you have to start; you have to start at birth. The baby was born wrong. God said, “*You’re born of the land of Canaan.*” Where have you seen that Canaan before? “*Cursed be Canaan.*” God put a curse upon Canaan.

And the Scripture says that we were born under the curse of the law. That’s right! Turn to **Psalm 51** and look at **verse 5**; *Behold; I was shapen in iniquity. In sin my mother conceived me.*”

When the baby is conceived, the seed which is planted is a sinful seed that comes from a sinful father and that sinful nature is imparted at conception. That’s what the Scripture says. We were born wrong.

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“Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them.” Now listen to this; if I did not have sin when I was an infant I would have not had sickness, I would’ve not had disease, and infants wouldn’t die because death comes as a result of sin. And where there’s no sin there’d be no death, there’d be no disease.

We’re born in sin. Listen to **Psalm 58:3**; listen to Him; *“The wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they’re born speaking lies.”* This evil nature is born in us because we’re born of sinful parents.

“In Adam we die. By one man’s disobedience we were made sinners.” A fellow doesn’t steal a watermelon and become a sinner as a result. He stole that watermelon because he is a sinner. The deed followed the thought. The deed followed the plan. And sin starts within us and then it’s demonstrated in outward acts.

So, the baby, the baby’s birth was all wrong and our birth is wrong. We’re born in sin. We must be born again to enter the kingdom of God.

“That which is born of flesh is flesh. And in the flesh dwelleth no good thing. In the flesh no man can please God. And flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” So, this baby that was born and not cleaned up and cast out in the field is a picture of us. *“We were born in sin.”*

Secondly: The infant was helpless, that’s right, impotent, powerless, and helpless; without strength, without help and without hope.

Not even the clay on the potter’s wheel is anymore helpless than that infant. He can’t do one thing for himself. The Scripture asks this question; *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin? Can the leper change his spots? Neither can you do good that are accustomed to doing evil.”*

We are without strength. Spiritually we are impotent. And if anything is to be done for us it’ll have to be done by someone else. We can’t help ourselves. If there’s to be a resurrection from the dead, it must come from God. If there’s to be a miracle performed, it must come from the hand of God from first to last.

For like this infant; we cannot lift ourselves. We cannot save ourselves; for we are not only impotent, but we are not even aware of our lost condition. Did you know that the sinners of this world, not only will not come to God that they might have life but they are not aware of their need to come to God. They’re not aware of their lost condition.

This baby lying there in the field; it felt the pain but didn’t know where it was coming from. This baby felt the pain and the discomfort but he had no idea, he had no intelligence, and he had no knowledge of his condition. And even so, men without God don’t know they are without God. They are helpless.

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Thirdly: This infant was dirty!

The Scripture says, *“Polluted, loathsome, to the loathing of thy person.”* Know this, I don’t want to offend you but this is our spiritual condition, every one of us, every son of Adam, and every daughter of Adam. We have ashes for beauty. We have shame for glory. We have rottenness for health. That’s right!

The Bible says; *“There’s none good, no not one. There’s none that understandeth. There’s none that seeketh after God. They’re altogether become unprofitable. There’s none that doeth good, no not one. There’s none righteous.”*

Our throat is an open sepulcher. The poison of snakes is under our lips. We’re like an open grave. Isaiah said; *“From the sole of our feet to the top of our heads; we’re full of sin, iniquity, self, and hatred for God.”* We are corrupt.

This baby; imagine that picture, not washed, not cleaned up, polluted in its blood, caked and dried blood lying out there in the field, been there for hours, just polluted, loathsome. Well that’s the way we look, not in the sight of other men, but in the sight of a Holy God who has perfect and holy eyes.

And my friend; I’m not talking about the harlot, the drunkard, the thief, the prisoner, or the murderer; I’m talking about all of us, you and me by nature. We’re not here to compliment one another; we’re here to speak the truth aren’t we?

And if we’re going to speak the truth we’ve got to declare this; that you may be moral, generous, honest, and you may be outwardly sober compared with other men and other women, but before God’s holiness, before God almighty’s holy law, *“We have all sinned and come short of His glory.”*

“All we like sheep have gone astray. We’ve turned everyone to his own way.” And we are polluted in our sins and we’re as void of holiness as the most vile creature that ever lived. So, that’s the description.

Fourth: God’s sovereign choice!

Now watch this; He said, *“I passed by you.”* The infant was not looking for help. The infant did not know his condition. The infant was not seeking help. God says: *“I passed by you.”* I like what the old hymn writer said:

**“Tis not that I did choose thee
For Lord that could not be
For had not thou chosen me
Thy glory I would not see.”**

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We didn't love God. Let's look at the Scripture and let's take it as God has written it: *"Herein is love, not that we love God; He loved us."*

"I passed by you," and in **verse 8** says; *"It was a time of love."* "You didn't love me, I loved you. I passed by you polluted in your blood. I came by. I came that way on purpose." Even as the Scripture says; *"Christ must need go through Samaria. Other sheep I have; them also I must bring."*

We didn't seek God; He sought us. He came where we were. He didn't send the message to this baby and say, "Now if you clean yourself up, if you get straightened out, and get up and walk, and come to me, I'll receive you."

No sir! He said, "I came where you were, in the cesspool of iniquity, the dunghill of despair. I came where you were."

Now watch this: *"And I saw you polluted in your blood. (I saw you just like you were)."*

Your friends didn't know your condition. They can't see your heart. *"Man looks on the outward countenance; God looks on the heart."* You didn't even know your true condition, but God knew it.

"I passed by you (and I saw you as you were, and I loved you, notwithstanding all)." *"God commended His love toward us that in while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Christ died for the ungodly. When we were enemies Christ died for us."*

My friend; there's nothing in us to merit His love. There's nothing about us to merit the grace of His Son. There's nothing in our future that would merit the mercy of our God. Isaiah said; *"We are all as an unclean thing. We all do fade as the leaf and our iniquities have driven us away and our righteousness's are filthy rags."*

Are you ever amazed that God should love you? Are you ever amazed that God should show mercy to you?

John Newton once said; "When I get to heaven three things are going to amaze me:

First of all: I'm going to be amazed when I see a lot of people there that I never expected to see.

Secondly: I'm going to miss a lot of people in heaven that I did expect to see.

Thirdly: The most amazing thing of all will be that I'll be there; that will amaze me."

That baby out there in the field, born under a curse, born of heathen parents, cast out into the field, impotent, without hope, without strength. God said, *"I passed by. I came where you were and I loved you. It was a time of love; I loved you and I called you and I made you my own, not because you were beautiful; you were polluted in your blood. You were loathsome in your person, but I chose you. And God hath chosen the foolish and the base and the despised."*

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I read a story one time about a black boy who came out of the south after the Civil War. He was 20 years of age. He left the south right after the Civil war and went north. He'd never seen the inside of a schoolroom, never in his life. The only place he'd ever been was a cotton field.

And he went north to Philadelphia, I believe it was, and he got a job as a mortar carrier, 20 years old. He couldn't read or write. He couldn't even write his name. And the Lord saved him. God visited him in mercy and God revealed Christ to his heart. And that boy came to a knowledge of Jesus Christ the Lord, came to faith.

And he wanted to read the Bible, so he started school. He started going to night school. He worked for a stonemason during the day carrying mortar and he would go to school at night. He learned to read, and he became the janitor of a black church in the north.

And he served as the janitor of that church. You know, when I think of this I think of David who said; *"I'd rather be the doorkeeper in the house of God than to dwell (as the king) in the tents of the wicked."*

But this black boy served as a janitor of this church till he was 50 years old. And then when he was 50 years of age they called him to be their pastor. And he pastored that church for 32 years until he was 82.

He'd preached to the largest crowds of any preacher in the United States. He preached to 10,000 people every Lord's Day. He pastored the largest black church in the United States. And he wrote some of our greatest hymns, some of your favorites.

He wrote:

**"Nothing between my soul and my Saviour
So that His blessed face may be seen
Nothing preventing the least of His pleasure
Keep the way clear; let nothing between."**

He wrote that song:

**"If the world from you withhold
Of its silver and its gold
And you have to get along
With meager fare.**

**Just remember in God's Word
How He feeds the little bird
Take your burden to the Lord
And leave it there."**

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Aren't those beautiful words? God chose this simple, uneducated, illiterate, black boy, and made him a great preacher and a great hymn writer for His glory. That's where He found all His people. He found them on the junk-heap. He found them, dead in trespasses and sin.

Now watch this and here's the command; *"I say unto thee. I passed by and I sought you. I loved you. I called you. I passed by when you were polluted in your blood and I said, live."*

Oh, my friend; I can stand here and preach to you till we both grow old and gray-headed, but unless God the Holy Ghost speaks in power nothing of any eternal value will be accomplished. If my voice is the only voice you hear, nothing is going to be accomplished for you.

You're not going to see what God's saying, you're not going to understand what the Holy Spirit is teaching. You're not going to see your lost condition. You're not going to see the glory and beauty of Christ. And you're never coming to repentance and faith unless God speaks; God's got to speak through His Word. He said, *"I passed by and I said, live."*

It very much like when the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. You know; **Genesis chapter 1** you have the creation of the world. *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."*

And it says, *"And the earth became without form and void."* God didn't make it that way. God makes everything perfect. But something happened. I believe it was the fall of Lucifer, Satan. Between **Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2** there's a space, there's a gap there.

And in **Genesis 1:2** it says; *"The Spirit of God moved over the face of the water, over the darkness."* He said, *"Let there be light and there was light."*

And that's what God does when He saves a sinner. The Holy Spirit comes over that sinner, the darkness of that sinner. *"Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil."*

They will not come to the light. They hate the light. But over there in darkness the Spirit of God comes and He says, *"Let there be light."*

Then Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 4:6**: *"God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in these hearts to give us a knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus."* That's a miracle.

And just like God walked by this baby, polluted in its blood, cast out, unwanted, unpitied. And He said; *"Live"* and that baby lived. And even so, the Holy Spirit quickens us.

You know the angel came to Mary and said; *"You're going to have a Son."* She said, *"Well; I don't know a man."* He said, *"But the Holy Spirit is coming upon you and the power of the highest will overshadow you and that which is born of you shall be called the Son of God."*

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And that's what happens when God saves a sinner. He comes over the dead soul and almighty God speaks and life is born. We're born of God. *"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but born of God."*

And then one day our Lord stood before the grave of Lazarus. He said; *"Roll away the stone."* And someone said; *"But Lord; he's been dead for several days and behold he stinketh."* And the Lord said; *"Roll away the stone."*

And they rolled away the stone and our Master spoke and He said; *"Lazarus; come forth."* And I'll tell you, that man who had been dead four days walked out of that grave with the grave clothes still wrapped about him and our Lord said; *"Loose him and let him go."*

And that's what Paul's writing about in **Ephesians chapter 2:1**: *"You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin. You hath He quickened."*

So, my friend; God says; *"I passed by you."* You were lost from birth. Your impotent inability was so prevalent, nothing you could do for yourself without God, without hope, without Christ, at your wit's end.

"I saw you in your blood, to the loathing of your person. And I said to you when you were in your blood (and He repeats that two or three times), God said, "live, live." God said, "Let there be light." God said, "Live."

Now in closing: I want you to look from **verses 8-14** and let's point out some things, God's gracious gifts:

First of all: He says this; He said, *"I washed you."*

Here's that baby lying there in its loathsome, polluted, condition. God said, "I came by and I washed you. I didn't leave you that way; I washed you, I cleaned you up." And I'll tell you my friend; the Scripture says, *"The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."* God purifies His people!

**"There's a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains**

**The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in His day
And there may I
(Listen; can you say it) 'though vile as he'
Wash all my sins away?"**

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“Yes, I washed you.” Christ washes us, forgives us, cleanses us, and purifies us, from all our sins. Isn’t that good news? That’s why the Gospel is called the Gospel; it’s good news that *“Christ cleanseth us from all sin.”*

Now watch the next thing, and He says, *“I anointed you with oil.”* Oil in the Scriptures is the Holy Spirit. God almighty will have no un-anointed priest in His temple. All of the priests not only had to be sprinkled with blood but they had to be anointed with oil, which is symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

Let me tell you this; everybody whom God saves has the Holy Spirit. The Scripture says, *“If any man have not the Spirit of God he’s none of His.”* The Scripture says, *“As many as are led by the Holy Spirit; they are the sons of God,”* led by the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, and filled with the Spirit.

Watch the next one now, **verse 10**: “Not only did I wash you, cleanse you, not only did I anoint you with oil, but I clothed you.” God almighty took those old rags off and gave us a spotless robe, just like he took the fig leaves off Adam and gave him a robe made of skin.

He had to kill an animal to do it. He had to shed blood to do it. In order to robe you and to clothe you and to cover your nakedness; God had to shed blood, the blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. *“I clothed you.”*

And my friend:

**“With His spotless garments on
We are as holy as God’s own Son.”**

Now watch this next line in **verse 11**, and He said; *“I decked you with ornaments (or I adorned you).”* He said, *“I put bracelets on your wrists.”* That’s symbolic of serving the Master. He said, *“I put a chain around your neck.”* In order to do that our heads had to be bowed. Our necks had to be bent in contrition and submission and humility to bow before the Lord as He puts the chain about our neck.

And then He said; *“I put a jewel on your forehead,”* right here, in a prominent place. Like the Indian women wore jewels right here on their forehead. That’s a witness, we know Christ, we love Him, we confess Him, and we don’t make ourselves obnoxious to people but we want them to know that Christ is our King.

And then He says, *“I put a beautiful crown on your head.”* I crowned you. He hath made us priests and kings to our God and Father.”

And then in closing; He said in **verse 14**: “You were perfect, not in yourself, not in your own goodness, not in your own beauty; you were *perfect in my comeliness.*” We wear His robe. We wear His crown. We wear His beauty. *“We’re complete in Him.”*

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What a picture of salvation, mercy for the miserable!