

DOCTRINE OF MERCILESSNESS (EMOTIONAL TOUGHNESS)

- I. Preliminary considerations.
 - A. This doctrine is **not**, I repeat, **not** emphasizing or teaching in any way that the believer is not to have and employ mercy when dealing with other people.
 - B. One evidence of a depraved mind is the lack of normal compassion and mercy. Rom. 1:28-31
 - C. The normal emotional reactions of compassion and mercy are so clearly taught in Scripture that it is difficult for one to overlook them. Lk. 10:30-37; Col. 3:12
 - D. What is also clearly taught by the Word of God is that there are times, places, and situations in which it is not appropriate to give expression to the normal compassion and mercy which one possesses.
 - E. Those occasions are the subject of this doctrine.

- II. Vocabulary.
 - A. Hebrew vocabulary.
 - 1. **חָסַד** (chus), verb, 24X, to pity or have compassion. The primary significance is that of a merciful or indulgent countenance or demeanor since it is most often used of the eyes. It refers to the internal feeling that one has for someone in trouble.
 - 2. **לָמַח** (chamal), verb, 41X, this verb focuses on the emotional response that results (or may result) in taking action to remove someone or something from some impending difficulty.
 - 3. Both of these words, as well as a few others, are used with the negative which indicates that these feelings and the potential actions that arise from these feelings are something that are not appropriate at certain times.
 - B. Greek vocabulary.
 - 1. **ἀνελεήμων** (aneleemon), 1X, without mercy or merciless. Rom. 1:31
 - 2. **ἀνέλκος** (aneleos), 1X, without mercy or compassion. James 2:13

- III. Definition and description.
 - A. Webster defines mercilessness as one that is destitute of mercy, cruel, unsparing; others define it as unhumaneness evidenced by an unwillingness to be kind or forgiving.
 - B. While compassion is the internal attitude, mercy is the overt action of kindness toward one who is suffering, troubled, or condemned.
 - C. Grace focuses on the fact that such feelings or actions are undeserved and unmerited by the recipient.
 - D. Within the normal human being, certain emotional responses are aroused when we observe another suffering; sometimes it does not matter whether they are suffering for deserved or undeserved reasons.
 - E. Mercilessness, or emotional toughness, deals with situations in which we are to overrule or suppress these normal responses.
 - F. There are times when doctrinal considerations demand that we not give expression to the normal emotions which we possess.

- IV. God's essence and mercy.
- A. God is the perfect standard of compassion and mercy by which we ourselves are to operate Lk. 6:36
 - B. There can be no doubt that God possesses love, mercy, compassion, and grace to the maximum; further, there can be no doubt that He manifests these qualities to those that do not deserve such treatment. Ps. 25:6; Isa. 30:18; James 5:11
 - C. God is also possesses the attribute of absolute righteousness, which is the watchdog of His essence, the attribute which governs all His actions. ISam. 2:2; Rev. 3:7, 4:8, 6:10
 - D. It should be evident to anyone who has studied the Word of God that God has been, and will be, absolutely merciless on certain occasions. Gen. 7:6ff, 19:24-26; Rev. 20:11-15
 - E. This *apparent* lack of compassion and mercy are easily understood if one recognizes that righteousness and justice are the attributes which ultimately determine God's course of action.
 - F. The fact that the expression of mercy is contingent on God's righteousness is clearly seen during the exchange between Abraham and God in Genesis 18:23ff
 - G. Therefore, while God always possesses the attribute of love from which His mercy flows, He obviously restricts the expression of mercy as His righteousness demands.
 - H. To accuse God of being uncaring or indifferent to sorrow or suffering demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of the makeup and function of the Divine essence and is blasphemous as well. Jn. 3:16
- V. Situations which clearly demand emotional toughness.
- A. Since God should be our standard for the expression of mercy and God Himself must, at times, limit or restrict the expression of mercy; it should come as no surprise that his children will have to do likewise. Matt. 10:24-25
 - B. Certain situations demand that the normal human expressions of compassion and mercy be suppressed in order to achieve a greater goal.
 - C. The believer who seeks to orient only to God's love and not His righteousness will consistently be off balance emotionally and make bad decisions as to how to conduct himself and handle certain situations.
 - D. The believer who is called upon to engage in warfare must put aside any feelings of compassion and mercy and destroy the enemy. Deut. 7:16; ISam. 15:2-3
 1. Those that fail to do so will very likely become casualties themselves.
 - E. Those in the establishment chain of command must suppress any feelings of compassion and mercy when executing justice on the criminal element of society. Deut. 19:11-13, 25:11-12
 1. In fact, this is the essence of the civil code, without which one cannot have a safe and healthy society. Deut. 19:21
 - F. Parents must set aside their normal feelings of love, mercy and compassion and administer consistent discipline to effectively discipline and instruct the child. Prov. 23:13-14
 - G. When it comes to dealing with religious revisionists the believer must be absolutely unmerciful. Deut. 13:6-11
 1. This is the decisive factor to which Jesus was referring when he taught that placing family above doctrine constituted an affront to Him. Matt. 10:34-37
 - H. The pastor-teacher must suppress his normal attachment to his congregation when he is forced to use severity in dealing with various problems that arise in the course of his ministry. IICor. 12:19-21; 13:2

- I. All believers must put aside their care and concern for other believers when they apply various aspects of the doctrine of separation toward those who will not adhere to the straight and narrow. ICor. 5:9ff; IIThess. 3:6-15
- J. While none of us like to see others suffer, we must recognize that God uses this method to teach us and other believers lessons we need to learn and cultivate the graces of the Christian way of life. Rom. 5:3; James 5:13

VI. Results of failure.

- A. Failure to properly deal with these types of issues may lead to catastrophic results in the life of the believer.
- B. Failure to orient to this doctrine, as with any doctrine, can result in Divine discipline in the life of the believer.
- C. Failure on the part of the military during periods of warfare may result in that soldier or another soldier losing his life.
- D. For those in the justice system to fail to administer severe penalties toward the criminal element not only jeopardizes the safety of the populace, it reinforces the mentality that there are no consequences for criminal activity. Eccles. 8:11
- E. Failure to suppress your normal feelings for your child and consistently discipline them will result in misery for the parent (Prov. 10:1, 19:13), discipline and potential disaster for the child. Prov. 13:24, 19:18
- F. Failure to deal mercilessly with religious reversionists will have an adverse impact on a local church and can result in others being dragged down spiritually. Deut. 7:1-5; Rom. 16:17-18
 - 1. This is extremely important when young people are considering getting emotionally involved with those that are negative.
 - 2. It is clear from the Romans passage that these types tend to prey on the weaker links in the congregation and any influence should be dealt with quickly and decisively. Tit. 2:10-11
- G. The pastor who does not put aside his own feelings and fails to use severity when necessary is not fulfilling his mandate for the ministry (II Tim. 4:1-4) and will never get his congregation to maturity. Col. 1:28-29
- H. Believers who will not apply the tough doctrine of separation toward those who continually flaunt STA activity, jeopardize the purity of the local church as a whole. ICor. 5:6

VII. Conclusions.

- A. There are many situations in life that demand that we exercise compassion and mercy, especially when dealing with other believers in the Royal family. Lk. 6:36; Col. 3:12
- B. Similarly there are occasions which demand that we suppress our Christian compassion and mercy and deal in a severe manner.
- C. The fact that you have to do this in no way indicates that you are not a compassionate person.
- D. On these occasions you may be perceived by others as being unfeeling, uncaring, harsh, etc. but do not let this dissuade you from doing what you know is doctrinally correct.
- E. People you love, even those in your own family, may attempt to pressure you into taking a more popular route in dealing with certain difficult circumstances, but stand your doctrinal ground.
- F. The fact that you love people, have compassion and mercy, and may be misunderstood and even rejected is one aspect of suffering that you may have to endure.
- G. This is part of the sufferings which Christ Himself experienced, which you have been called to endure. Phil. 1:29; Col. 1:24

- H. One must always recognize that it is more important to be righteous than it is to be popular or to pursue the approbation of others. Gal. 1:10; IThess. 2:4
- I. Emotional toughness does not mean that you are not grace oriented, but that you do not put up with the various types of foolishness and have some iron in the soul. Acts 15:36-40