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Mercy Triumphs over Judgment

by Francis Frangipane

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren (Romans 8:29).

Functional Christlikeness is the singular goal of God for the church, yet we find instead that many Christians are angry. Why shouldn't they be, they ask. Major strongholds of evil and oppression exist almost without restraint in our society today. Not only is evil expanding in our culture, but many of its forms are actually protected by a demonically invaded legal system. Their anger is understandable. Whether we reside in a major metropolitan area or make our home in a small rural setting, the boundaries of morality in our country continue to erode. We have only to think about the protection given to those favoring abortion, the mainstreaming of homosexuality, or the applause offered to immorality, and a holy grieving stirs within us.

Redemption, Not Anger

We should be deeply troubled by sin, for it has the power not only to destroy our souls, but also to provoke the wrath of God upon our nation. Yet how we handle evil in our society is the point of this study. Our goal is to win our war—not just react to the battle. We must remember:

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:12 KJV).

The moment our anger is directed toward "flesh and blood" enemies, we surrender our hope for victory.

God's objective goes beyond simply eliminating evil. He seeks redemption, not revenge. We might have all the doctrines correct about salvation, and our church attendance record might be spotless, but if we continue to harbor an angry spirit, we are walking away from Christlikeness; we are in danger of falling away.

Yet you are not in apostasy, beloved. Your quest is the nature of Christ. You know that apart from conformity to Him, you will never be satisfied. Though we all have often fallen short, still we abide beneath our Father's covering grace. Indeed, so essential to His purpose is the Christlike transformation of our hearts, that God will endure our frequent mistakes, granting us time until His call to love awakens within us.

Thus, with relief we read how the early disciples, who similarly misrepresented Christ's redemptive mission, eventually were restored and transformed. When

Jesus and His followers passed through Samaria, they were rejected and scorned by the locals. Off ended, the apostles became indignant and angry. Two disciples even asked, "*Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?*" (Luke 9:54).



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How eager they were to embrace the administration of God's wrath! How conveniently the wrath of God could be used to support their own shortsighted love. Jesus rebuked them plainly, saying, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of" (v. 55).

This is exactly the problem in Christianity today: many sincere Christians do not know what spirit they are of. They do not know the difference between a judgmental spirit and the Spirit of Christ, the Redeemer.

In the clearest terms, Jesus again explained His mission to His disciples. He said, "The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (v. 56).

Jesus was speaking of all men in general, but His response concerned cultural enemies in particular. The Samaritans, in the minds of the Jews, were a people scorned and reproached. Yet, even for people who were enemies, He said that He did not come to destroy but to save. His disciples eventually learned this lesson and were used by God to spread the Gospel all over the world. What we see in Jesus is to be repeated in substance and power in the church. Thus, our mission is to carry out His mission: to see people and situations redeemed, not destroyed.

Love, Not Law

Yet, for some reason, many Christians identify the height of spirituality not with Christ but with Israel's Old Testament prophets, who were called by God to bring specific messages of warning and punishment to His people. Christian, listen to me: we are not

Old Testament prophets; we are new covenant redeemers. Our primary pattern is not Jeremiah, but Jesus Christ, who brought grace and truth into the world (John 1:17).

Our standard is love, not law. Love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:10).

We are the body of Christ. While we can learn much from the Old Testament, and see reflections of Christ in it, we have no purpose greater than to reveal Christ as He revealed Himself in the New Testament, as the fulfillment of the law. Why should we pattern ourselves after Israel's prophets when they had specific messages from God for specific circumstances? They were sent to a people under

law, who did not have available Christ as Savior, and who did not know the indwelling of the Holy Spirit or the full grace of God, which is now available to all sinners. Under the law, if the Jews violated just one commandment, they were guilty of all (James 2:10). Although the Lord deeply loved the Israelites, they fell short of God's glory. However, the Father's purpose was not to condemn them, but to provide a better salvation, the free gift of eternal life through faith in Christ—redemption based not on what a man achieved, but on whom he believed.

"For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all" (Rom. 11:32). The prophet's exposure of Israel's sin was part of the closure of the old covenant, a preparation for God's people to embrace mercy. To pattern ourselves after the prophets is to position ourselves in a former dispensation under specific circumstances for which we have no involvement or voice.

Yet the disciples were emerging from the Old Testament dispensation. So when they sought to call fire upon their enemies, as appropriate as this seemed to them, Jesus corrected them. He did not come to destroy His enemies, but "to save them" (Luke 9:56).

"But," you argue, "God needs to judge sinners for what they are doing." That may be so. Perhaps the world needs a good dose of the wrath of God to wake it up. However, only One person in heaven and earth is worthy to initiate God's wrath: the Lamb who was slain, who stands in intercession before God's throne. (See Revelation 5:6–14.)

The Lamb, Not the Prophets

Consider this: the only Being in all the universe worthy to release wrath because of sin is the very One in all the universe least likely to do so, since He Himself is the sacrifice for sin. The Lamb of God, whose offering abides eternally at God's throne, is the One to whom authority is given to open the book of divine wrath.

Jesus is the Lamb, the sacrifice for sin. Because He paid the highest price for redemption, we can be confident that He will not release divine fury until He fully exhausts divine mercy. Even then, when His judgments finally come, they will continue to



Our standard is love, not law. Love is the fulfillment of the law.

from Romans 13:10

be guided by His motive of mercy, giving time for sinners to repent.

God's Word tells us plainly: *"As He is, so also are we in this world"* (1 John 4:17). Our pattern is not the prophets, but the Lamb. Our goal is not merely the exposure of sin, but also the unveiling of the sacrifice for sin. Our great commission is to bring healing and the message of God's mercy to the nations. Until Christ breaks the seals that lead to wrath, we must stand in intercession before God as ambassadors of the Lamb. May the Lord give us a clear vision of this truth: intercession is the essence of Christ's life.



Not only is He now at the right hand of the Father interceding for us (Rom. 8:34), but His coming to earth and dying for sins was one extended act of intercession. Jesus beheld the depravity of mankind's sin. He examined it carefully in all of its offensiveness, perversity, and repulsiveness. But the wonder of the Gospel is that, in spite of mankind's sin, God

so deeply loved the world that He sent His Son to die for us (John 3:16–17). We are called to follow this same amazing pattern of mercy.

We are not minimizing sin when we maximize Christ's mercy. There is a difference between whitewashing sin and bloodwashing it. The reality that compels God's heart, that is an underlying principle of life, is *"mercy triumphs over judgment"* (James 2:13). To live a life of mercy corresponds perfectly with God's heart. Mercy precisely fulfills the divine purpose: to transform man into the Redeemer's image.

Compassion, Not Sacrifice

He told the self-righteous to go and learn what God meant when He said, *"I desire compassion [mercy], and not sacrifice"* (Hosea 6:6). A religion without love is an abomination to God. The church needs to learn that God desires love and compassion, not merely an adherence to ritual and sacrifice. Thus, Jesus said His Father's house would be a *"house of prayer for all the nations"* (Mark 11:17). True prayer is born of love and comes in the midst of sin and need. It comes not to condemn, but to cover. All nations sin. All cultures have seasons of moral decline and spiritual malaise. Yet these periods can become turning points if, in times of distress, intercessors cry to God for mercy.

Thus, Christlike prayer brings redemption out of disaster.

Mercy, Not Wrath

The church is created not to fulfill God's wrath, but to complete His mercy. Remember, we are called to be a *"house of prayer for all...nations."* Consider passionately this phrase: *"prayer for."* Jesus taught His disciples to *"pray for"* (Matt. 5:44) those who would persecute or mistreat them. When Job *"prayed for"* (Job 42:10) his friends, God fully restored him. We are to *"pray for the peace of Jerusalem"* (Ps. 122:6), and *"pray for"* (James 5:16) each other so that we may be healed. Paul wrote that God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, he urged *"that entreaties and prayers... be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority"* (vv. 1–2).

Jesus said His Father's house would be a "house of prayer for all the nations"

Mark 11:17

Intercession, Not Cynicism

"But," you argue, *"my country (or city) is a modern manifestation of ancient Babylon."* I don't think so. But even if it were, when the Lord exiled Israel to Babylon, He didn't order His people to judge and criticize their new cities. Rather, He commanded, *"Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you... and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare"* (Jer. 29:7).

Time after time, the scriptural command is to pray for, not against; to pray mercifully, not vindictively. God's call is for prayer moved by compassion, not condemnation. Indeed, at its very essence, the nature of intercession is to appeal to God for forgiveness, and then redemption, to come to sinful people. We have studied what is wrong with our society and can prove, with charts and surveys, the trends of sin, yet we have failed to appreciate the influence of the intercessions of Christ.

We consider ourselves experts on the nature and cause of sin, but deny the nature and cause of Christ, which is redemption. My friends, being informed by the news media is in no way the same thing as being transformed into the nature of the Savior. The media sees what is wrong with the world and exposes it; Christ saw what was wrong and died for it. If one could gaze into the image being created within the heart of the church, one would find

that it would be more the cynical attitude of the news media than the redemptive attitude of our Shepherd. Righteousness must ascend higher than ascribing to the moral views of our political party; we are called to the standards of God. Study Isaiah 53. It reveals in wondrous detail the Savior's nature: Christ numbered Himself with the sinners (v. 12). He

interceded for the transgressors (v. 12). He is "with us" (see Matthew 1:23) and "for us" (Rom. 8:31), even when He is speaking to us of our iniquity.

But the world sees a church with rocks in its hands, looking for adulterers and sinners. We have become the "church of the angry Christians." In the drama that is unfolding in the world today, we have not usually been playing the role of Christ, but more often the part of the

Pharisees. Let us drop the rocks from our hands, then lift our hands, without wrath, in prayer to God (1 Tim. 2:8).

"Prayer-Mental," Not Judgmental

God does not want us to be judgmental; He wants us prayer-mental. As instinctively as we have judged people, we should pray for them instead. Today, countless Christians are angry with their elected officials. We say our anger is "righteous indignation." Really? Jesus expressed "righteous indignation" for, perhaps, a total of one hour during His recorded

ministry. Once was for the hardness of people's hearts (Mark 3:5), another was for the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes (Matt. 23:13-36), and other times were at the temple when the Father's house was used for something other than redemptive prayer. (See, for example, Mark 11:17.) This is important: the thing that angered Jesus was not the sin in society, but the lack of love and intercession in His people.

How long has your anger lasted? Are you sure your love has not grown cold? Are you sure you are not seeking to justify a root of bitterness and call it righteous indignation?

"Let us consider with holy fear the warning of God: 'Judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment'" (James 2:13).

Taken from *The Power of One Christ-like Life* by Francis Frangipane, ©2000.

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Francis will be one of the speakers at the August 3-6, 2011, Holy Spirit Conference, "POWER...RECEIVE IT!" See enclosed brochure.



Francis Frangipane



Some of What We've Been Up To



March 2011: Paul Anderson, center, and his team on a trip to **Latvia, Finland and Norway.** Clint Wolcyn on left, Fred Thoni on right.



April 2011 Arise! Women's Conference in Minn. Left-right: Main Speaker Bonnie Chavda, Aslan, Ali and Denise Siemens



November 2010 Arise! Women's Conference in California. Denise Siemens (5th from the right in back) and team. Judith MacNutt, 4th from the right in back, was the main speaker.

Women's Night Out

Friday, June 17, 7:00 p.m.
"Still Listening" with Denise Siemens
 Worship, Teaching, Listening, Praying
 North Heights Church, Use Door B
 Arden Hills, MN • No charge

Home Groups on the Prophetic

September 2011-January 2012
 February-May 2012
 You may attend one or both of the sessions
 Using books One-Three of Graham Cooke's prophetic series.

Recipe using Cooke's Books: discussion of material, praying prophetically for each other, supporting each other. Taste and See!

We need host homes and leaders. Interested: ilrc@aol.com.

Details on groups and locations will be posted this summer. Sign up for Arise! e-letter or check the website: LutheranRenewal.org

We had over 100 women who participated this year. Join us!

