

#### Volume 4+ Mercy, Forgiveness and Grace: Expressions of Love

Reflecting on the stolen silver scene in Les Misérables where the Bishop offered not just mercy and forgiveness but added grace (more silver to the thief), I decided to reread the whole Bible with 'fresh' eyes. Reading the entire Bible from the perspective of God's mercy, forgiveness and grace, which are byproducts of His unconditional love for every human being, changed many of my misperceptions of God. My new perceptions changed my lifestyle as well.

I discovered that the Old Testament was not just about sin, condemnation and judgment. It was about living in love. I found in story after story, especially the sordid stories, that God's grace was at work. I began to see the entire Bible as the **most amazing love story** ever. Consider the stories of Job and Joseph who experienced enormous adversity and misery. Yet they knew and loved God in a deeply personal way. They didn't shake their fist at God in complaint, like I was so prone to do. They saw God at work promoting the glory of His love and trusted Him despite their own personal pain and misery. They were confident in God's purposes.

When God confronted the first murderer, Cain, He showed him mercy and withheld his due punishment which should have been death. God even placed a mark of protection on Cain's forehead warning all that God would do seven times worse to them than they did toward Cain. It isn't that God doesn't get angry about things that humans do that are evil. It is that God made us to love us and for us to love each other. God loves us like we love even our wayward children,

Let yourself revel in the love that God has for you. He wants to release you from your feelings of guilt, shame and fear by continuing to pour His love upon you. Your parents may not have been good at all, but don't consider God as an **imperfect** parent such as human parents maybe. By simply believing that God Himself in the person of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus, paid the penalty for you. Forgiveness is simply letting God "pay it forward"(the penalty for your sins, which are crimes against relationship) to Jesus who paid for all sin.

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan