

Speaking to the soul



Mercy

God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realise that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life. 1 Timothy 1:16

The apostle Paul never forgot his colourful past. He had been so committed to his Jewish faith that he had gone to extraordinary lengths to destroy the Church. He was convinced that Jesus was the enemy of everything he held

dear, so he enthusiastically threw his energies into trying to crush Christianity. When his life was turned around on the road to Damascus, it changed everything. He came to realise how wrong he had been, and to see the wickedness of what he had done. He felt that he was the worst possible sinner. He knew he didn't deserve the love and forgiveness of God. It was given entirely because of God's mercy.

Mercy is a wonderful word, but it can be very hard to receive because we understand the principle of justice. If I exceed the speed limit, I expect that there will be consequences. That's how a system of justice works, and we all want to live in a society that respects the principles of justice. If I do something wrong and am told that there is no penalty and no rebuke because I have been forgiven, that flies in the face of justice. That's what the apostle Paul struggled with. He knew he deserved condemnation, but what he received was mercy and forgiveness.

Paul's experience of mercy totally changed his understanding of life, and he concluded that if God could have mercy on him after his catalogue of sin, God could be merciful to anyone! Here is good news for all of us: whatever wrongs we may have done, God reaches out to us in mercy. It may be hard to take because we know how richly we deserve to be condemned, but God opens his arms to each of us and promises to set us free.

QUESTION

How do you respond to the fact that God has treated you with mercy?

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you, for you have not treated me with justice but with endless mercy. Amen

Photo - Co Antrim lighthouse

