

“BUT I OBTAINED MERCY”

The Bible teaches that God’s mercy and love are in overabundance (Psa. 25:6). When the apostle Paul recalls how God’s plan of salvation was offered to him despite his past, he states, “the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love (1 Tim. 1:14). The grace of God is “exceeding abundant” and is offered to all men just as it was to Paul. The inspired John writes that Jesus “is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Many times, people look back into their pasts and conclude that they are not “good enough” to be called a child of God. What must be realized is that “Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15), not people who are already “good enough.” Jesus says, “they that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31-32). Paul considered his past and concluded that he was the chief of all sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). However, because Paul obeyed the Gospel plan of salvation, which culminated with his baptism, he had his past sins “washed away” (Acts 22:16). No wonder Paul was so thankful to the Lord, “for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy” (1 Tim. 1:12-13). If the grace of God is able to forgive the sins of blasphemy, persecution, and murder (Acts 8:1), so too, can you and I obtain mercy. Obtaining, or acquiring God’s mercy, is an individual responsibility. God has offered mercy, we must do what is necessary to attain it. By following the same plan of salvation as did Paul, one can become a Christian – a child of God – “for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). No matter what one has done in his past, by turning away from those things never to return, (i.e., repentance), he can be forgiven. Paul states, “this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phi. 3:13-14).

There is, however, a way that one can be “unforgivable” – by totally rejecting God’s offer of grace and mercy. Though Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, we must appropriate that grace by obeying His Word (Heb. 5:8-9; John 12:48). Paul “obtained mercy” and was forgiven because he obeyed. In order for us to obtain the same mercy and be forgiven, we too, must obey. Let us put the things which are behind us to rest and “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

- *Brad Green*