

## THE COMPASSIONATE NATURE OF MERCY

Psalms 145:9 ... "the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."

Sometime ago, a dear friend in Christ used the phrase "should show no mercy" concerning the treatment of an opponent in a sporting contest. Initially, I was a little troubled because the word "mercy" has serious spiritual implications. But after I thought about it and considered the godly character of my friend, I realized it was only a casual figure of speech, not a cause for concern. However, it is not a term that I can use in that manner. The entire concept of mercy is authored by God and is used by him as an expression of compassion.

Many principles and concepts we use every day, originated with God. I have heard people use the words "born again," to describe how they feel when they lose weight, get a new hair style, or land a new job. Some use the word "redemption" to express their joy over a successful medical operation, and "salvation" to express their profound love for another person. Unbelievers use the word "blessing" to describe their good luck, and "fate" to express the outcomes of their bad decisions.

We often see in sporting events, a competitor help another struggling athlete cross the finish line, or help an opposing basketball player to his feet after a collision. Race car drivers often stop to help other drivers escape their burning cars, giving up their own chances to win. Mountain climbers stop their ascents of mountains, to help an injured climber. These are true acts of mercy. A competitor giving up his or her chance to win, to help an opponent; giving up the chance to be victorious in order to avoid hurting an opponent.

God demonstrates mercy – kindness and compassion – to sinners who repent and turn to him for salvation. But God also instructed the Israelites to destroy their enemies, and eventually God will send people to hell who reject him, because they made themselves God's enemies. Those are acts of God to prevent evil from hurting or killing others, such as a police officer who shoots an armed person who is threatening innocent people. However, these situations have no similarity to sporting events and games.

A godly person does not treat a sporting opponent, a game partner, or a spelling bee competitor as the enemy; someone to be dominated over and hurt to accomplish the win. Some types of sporting events begin with a hand-shake between opponents, then develop into blood-thirsty battles. This is why I believe violent sports have no place in the life of believers, because the atmosphere, the chanting of the crowd, and the monetary value of the prize often give way to brutality. Let us not forget the author of mercy, and understand what it means, as well as what it means to deprive someone of mercy.

A Christian can compete in sporting, academic and professional competitions and aim to win, without treating his or her opponents as the enemy. If you are involved in an occupation, sport or contest that demands that you dominate another person, especially physically, I urge you to search your heart and ask yourself if that is a suitable option for a Christian; for someone who has been shown unlimited mercy by God.

Copyright © 2018 Datu Wali Mission Foundation