



LORD
HAVE
MERCY



PRISONS WEEK 2016

LORD HAVE MERCY

A WEEK OF PRAYER 9TH - 15TH OCTOBER, 2016

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As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance, crying out, "Jesus, master, have mercy on us!"

LUKE 17 V12 - 13 (NLV)

As we grow in faith and realise how much God loves each one of us—how great is his mercy in forgiving, nurturing and encouraging us—then we find that we ourselves become more able to show mercy to others, and then to ask God to show more mercy to us. It's a virtuous circle: he is merciful, so we become merciful, and then we experience more of his mercy! But we know that we could always do better, and although God calls us to perfection, only God is perfect. So, in this Year of Mercy, as declared by Pope Francis, 'Lord, have mercy' is our shared, common prayer, putting us all on holy ground and an equal footing as we draw closer to Jesus, the 'face of the Father's mercy'.

SUNDAY: The Prisons Week Prayer - Lord, you offer freedom to all people. We pray for those in prison. Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist. Support with your love prisoners and their families and friends, prison staff and all who care. Heal those who have been wounded by the actions of others, especially the victims of crime. Help us to forgive one another, to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly together with Christ in his strength and in his Spirit, now and every day. **Amen.**

MONDAY: FOR THOSE WHO ARE PRISONERS

It is easy to condemn prisoners, to thank God that we are not like that, to pass judgement and to be content with our own virtue. But for those of us who are in prison it is easy to get angry, consumed by shame or despair, or to assume that nothing is our fault and that life has it 'in for us'. However, all of us have fallen short of the glory of God, and all of us are in need of his mercy. Whether we are persistent offenders or have never been near a prison, we all need to experience his mercy which leads to the hope of change.

God of justice and mercy, you are always ready to forgive and to restore. Have mercy on all those in prison, bring hope to the broken, and be present through the hours, days, months and years of long or short sentences. May all know that you alone are holy and in you alone is perfect forgiveness, newness and fullness of life. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

TUESDAY: FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

For those of us who become the victims of crime life may never be the same again. Too often we are trapped by the actions of others into a past that is difficult and painful. The memories can be ever present and the pain seems unending. We may blame ourselves and feel unable to escape a repeating cycle of distress. Help us to be gentle on ourselves, to learn of God's love for us. Let us be open and ready to accept the healing which his mercy will bring, so that we may move on with life.

God of love and mercy be present to all who have been the victims of crime, that we may know the comforting support of your presence. In your mercy teach us to be gentle with ourselves and with one another, lead us and heal us in our journey to new life and hope. Help us to remember that you are always with us to the end of time. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

WEDNESDAY: FOR THE FAMILIES

The families and children of those caught up in events over which they have had no control, for which they are not responsible, often serve an unintended 'hidden sentence'. For those of us whose loved ones are either the victims of crime, or the families of the perpetrators of crime we need grace to remain loving, faith to be constant in offering support, and mercy to be patient when progress is slow.

God of grace and strength show your mercy on all those whose loved ones struggle to build new lives from the shame and darkness of offending, or from the distress and brokenness of being the victims of the harm caused by crime. Let your grace and mercy rule in their lives bringing encouragement and healing from all that has gone wrong and the assurance of growth and peace for the future. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

THURSDAY: FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

People in prison have lived as part of our communities, and most of them will return back into these communities. Both inside and outside of the prison walls, community life can fall short of the ideals of rehabilitation and redemption. We all need God's mercy to be good neighbours to those who were once separated from us by their behaviour and imprisonment; to help them build new lives upon their return, and prevent further harm to others and greater disadvantage to themselves.

God of perfect love and mercy, look on us your children as we seek to build your kingdom in our communities. Give us the gifts we need to build one another up, to be good neighbours helping us all to meet our potential. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us that we might know your forgiveness and peace. Help us to show your mercy to one another as we seek the best you have to offer for each one of us. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.



FRIDAY: FOR THOSE WHO WORK IN PRISONS

It is easy to assume that we are OK. Rushed and overworked maybe, but basically decent and trying to do a good job in a challenging environment. We can overestimate our own resources and capacities, working hard, doing our best until we hit the buffers of fatigue and stress. We need to know God's mercy and help in our work and in our whole lives, so that we can continue in our roles, serving in his strength faithfully.

God of power and might, our strength and support, have mercy on all those who work in prison. Give to them grace and courage to persevere, the desire to seek new ways to serve faithfully, to recognise your presence in every situation and to make your love and mercy known to all. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

SATURDAY: FOR ALL WORKING IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

It is difficult and challenging to administer justice, getting the right balance between retribution and mercy, between the hope of change and the need for punishment. To deal fairly with offenders, victims and communities takes fine judgement and those of us who work in this area need God's wisdom. We need to experience God's mercy ourselves so that we do not become hardened and disillusioned and can administer justice wisely and fairly, with compassion and grace.

God of all wisdom and grace, give to those who administer justice both the strength and mercy, wisdom and grace to know their need of your mercy and strength to fulfill their task and to meet the needs of all those who come before them. May they recognise their dependence on you, and their need of you in all their work. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For forty years Prisons Week has prepared prayer literature to enable the Christian community to pray for the needs of all those affected by prisons: prisoners and their families, victims of crime and their communities, those working in the criminal justice system, and the many people who are involved in caring for those affected by crime on the inside and outside of our prisons. Please pray each day during Prisons Week, but also ask yourself whether there is one thing that you as an individual, or as a church, can do to help any of the people that you are praying for.

For more information, to make a donation or to order more of these prayer leaflets:

- visit our website www.prisonweek.org

- email prisonweek@spurgeons.org

- write to Prisons Week, c/o Spurgeons, 74 Wellingborough Road, Rushden, Northants NN10 9TY

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