I Have Become All Things to All Men through Mercy

By Mitch Kuhn

This study was inspired by Mike Vinson's study on the Nazarite Vow.

Nazarite Vow Part 1

Nazarite Vow Part 2

Mike showed that the Nazarite vow is a sign of immaturity that we must all take part of and mature beyond at our appointed time. I'm going to further this topic by explaining the spiritual significance and practical application of these verses in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

(1Co 9:19 NKJV) For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;
(1Co 9:20 NKJV) and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law
(1Co 9:21 NKJV) to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law;
(1Co 9:22 NKJV) to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak.
(1Co 9:23 NKJV) I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.
(1Co 9:24 NKJV) Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Before Paul was born again and began to grow and mature in the Spirit, he was a carnal man who kept the Law of Moses. In Philippians he tells us about his great zeal for this carnal law, even to the point of persecuting the true Church of God.

(Php 3:4 NKJV) though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:
(Php 3:5 NKJV) circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;
(Php 3:6 NKJV) concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

We will all live by every word, and each and every one of us was zealous for carnal commands and ordinances. For some it was the literal Law of Moses, and for others it was other religious traditions. The point is that we all come
from the same state of mind spiritually speaking, although the physical details are quite different.

At some point we have our road to Damascus experience like Paul where Christ truly reveals himself to us and we begin our journey towards maturity in the Spirit. We are full of zeal, but we lack the maturity to understand and obey all the commands of Christ. These verses in John are so very true.

(Joh 16:12 NKJV) "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.
(Joh 16:13 NKJV) However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

Consider a baby. At first it can only digest milk, because any other food will make the baby quite ill and harm its development. The same is true for newborn babies in Christ. Paul explains in 1 Cor 3.

(1Co 3:1 NKJV) And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.
(1Co 3:2 NKJV) I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

This milk is necessary for a season for our growth and the Lord is good to give us what we need right when we need it.

(1Pe 2:2 NKJV) as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

Here is a study series on the Milk Doctrines:

**Milk Doctrines**

The growth process certainly does not stop after we leave our spiritual childhood and become an adult. Virtually every person has stopped growing physically by the age of 20, but there is still more maturing to take place.

The Apostle Paul is a great example of how even after we are mature enough to teach others and strengthen the brethren, we still have a great deal to learn.

(Luk 22:32 KJV) But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted (G1994), strengthen thy brethren.
The Greek word for converted literally means "to turn around".

(Luk 1:16 KJV) And many of the children of Israel shall he turn (G1994) to the Lord their God.

Once we are converted, we have been turned towards the one true God and are now walking the narrow way towards him. Since we are going in the right direction, we can have others follow us and strengthen them to head toward the true God.

Paul says this very thing in 1 Cor 11.

(1Co 11:1 KJV) Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

By analyzing various details given to us in Paul's many letters, we can get a general idea of the order in which he wrote his letters. Through this, God has given us the ability to see Paul's growth, as he was led by the Spirit of God down the narrow way.

1 Corinthians is one of his earlier letters, which is quite significant to the point of this study. In this letter Paul is most certainly strengthening the brethren as he is being a good leader and providing much needed admonition to these babes in Christ. He is definitely not a babe at this point in his walk with Christ. Nevertheless, Paul was not yet perfected and did not fully understand how to apply physically some of the spiritual things that he was learning.

(Php 3:12 NKJV) Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.
(Php 3:13 NKJV) Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,
(Php 3:14 NKJV) I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

So put yourself in Paul's shoes...or sandals. He is a zealous law abiding Jew, a Pharisee, the zealous of the zealous. His entire life is devoted to meticulously obeying every aspect of this carnal law.

The scriptures reveal that Paul and Peter both knew that no man is justified by the works of the law, but rather by Faith in Christ. However it was not easy for them to immediately understand how to apply this new knowledge.
They continued to keep the law when it was convenient and served a purpose, but did not think they were saved by the law. Nor did Paul teach the Jews to stop keeping the law initially; he just made it clear that it was not how they were saved. The Gospel was never, "keep the Law of Moses and be saved". I do not know of any verses in the New Testament that admonish a Jew for not keeping the law.

It was a tremendous transition to completely come out from under the Law of Moses that took time. It took time for Paul to understand what to do and what to say about it, and it took time for others to accept it.

Acts 15 makes it clear how Peter believed that the Jews and Gentiles were both saved. This is in response to a question raised in Acts 15:1.

(Act 15:1 NKJV) And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

(Act 15:7 NKJV) And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.
(Act 15:8 NKJV) So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us,
(Act 15:9 NKJV) and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.
(Act 15:10 NKJV) Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?
(Act 15:11 NKJV) But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

Clearly the apostles and elders that were in agreement with Peter knew that the Law of Moses was not for salvation. The application of that understanding is what took time to be worked out in their lives.

The council in Jerusalem in Acts 15 happened before Galatians was written. In Gal 2 we have the story of Peter when confronted by Paul for being a hypocrite. Here we are told that Peter is a Jew living as a Gentile, clearly not keeping the Law.

(Gal 2:11 NKJV) Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;
(Gal 2:12 NKJV) for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself,
fearing those who were of the circumcision.
(Gal 2:13 NKJV) And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

(Gal 2:14 NKJV) But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?

(Gal 2:15 NKJV) We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

(Gal 2:16 NKJV) knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Paul just said that the law is not for justification in Gal 2:16, and he makes the same point again in Gal 5. He is admonishing the Galatians for trying to keep the law to be justified.

(Gal 5:1 NKJV) Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

(Gal 5:2 NKJV) Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

(Gal 5:3 NKJV) And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

(Gal 5:4 NKJV) You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

As I mentioned earlier, 1 Corinthians is one of Paul's earliest letters. He makes a statement that sums up how he approached his ministry at that time.

(1Co 9:19 NKJV) For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;

(1Co 9:20 NKJV) and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;

(1Co 9:21 NKJV) to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law;

(1Co 9:22 NKJV) to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some.

There are numerous examples of Paul keeping the law himself throughout the book of Acts as Mike pointed out in his study that I referenced earlier. So
while Paul knew that the flesh profited nothing and that the law would not justify anyone, it took time for him to realize that keeping the law was not a good witness to others. He was quite bold in his letter to the Galatians, but they were Gentiles and not Jews.

Just as it took Paul and the rest of the apostles time to come out of the law, so too does it take us time for our actions in our lives to catch up with our understanding. I thought before that the story in Acts 21 of Paul keeping the vow was caving into the pressure of the Jews, but now I see that it was he trying to become all things to all men for the purpose of spreading the Gospel. That was the faith he had been given at that time.

(Act 21:20 NKJV) And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law;
(Act 21:21 NKJV) but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.
(Act 21:22 NKJV) What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.
(Act 21:23 NKJV) Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow.
(Act 21:24 NKJV) Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.

It's very similar to baptism in 1st Corinthians chapter 1. At some point the keeping of the outward ritual actually hinders one’s growth and it must be left behind.

(1Co 1:14 NKJV) I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,
(1Co 1:15 NKJV) lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.
(1Co 1:16 NKJV) Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.
(1Co 1:17 NKJV) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

Christ did not send Paul to baptize, just as he did not send Paul to keep the Law of Moses. Nevertheless, for a season Paul did not understand how to apply his newfound knowledge.
In Luke and John we have examples of Christ clearly breaking the Law of Moses and using that as an opportunity to teach the truth. Paul would eventually come to the same place and teach that the Law of Moses was done away with, but it took some time.

Luk 6:1  Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands.
Luk 6:2  And some of the Pharisees said to them, "Why are you doing that is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?"
Luk 6:3  But Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him:
Luk 6:4  how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?"
Luk 6:5  And He said to them, "The Son of Man is also Lord of the sabbath."

(Joh 5:10 NKJV) The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."
(Joh 5:11 NKJV) He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.' "
(Joh 5:12 NKJV) Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?"
(Joh 5:13 NKJV) But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place.
(Joh 5:14 NKJV) Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."
(Joh 5:15 NKJV) The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.
(Joh 5:16 NKJV) For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.
(Joh 5:17 NKJV) But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

Christ also gives us an example of becoming all things to all men.

(Mat 17:24 NKJV) When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?"
(Mat 17:25 NKJV) He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do
the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?
(Mat 17:26 NKJV) Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free.
(Mat 17:27 NKJV) Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."

It takes great discernment to what to do and say and at any given time to become all things to all men for the sake of the Gospel, yet not harm someone's faith or set a bad example. As Paul and the Church matured this became more and more clear and the keeping of the law was put away that the focus might be on Christ and not Moses.

I've been going through Hebrews recently and it is by far the most detailed explanation that the purpose of the law of Moses was to be a shadow of Christ. This letter pretty much tells any Jew reading it that keeping the law is not to be kept because it has been done away with. This is one of the later books in the chronology of the NT.

(Heb 7:18 KJV) For there is verily a **disannulling of the commandment** going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.
(Heb 7:19 KJV) For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope **did**; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

This is the same thing said in Eph 2:15.

(Eph 2:15 KJV) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, **even the law of commandments contained in ordinances**; for to make in himself of twain one new man, **so** making peace;

Just as Paul went through a process to come out of the law of Moses, so too do we go through a process to be set free from the law of sin that we may serve Christ.

In Romans 14 Paul explains this process that he went through himself and that we all go through.

(Rom 14:1 NKJV) **Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.** (do to argue about the mature discernment of the word)
For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.

For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.

For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

The whole point of the passage is that there are those who are weak in faith and those that are strong in faith and that we must bear with one another as we mature.

There is no doubt that the weak in faith is the one who thinks there are certain foods that cannot be eaten and that certain days must be kept. These are remnants from the law of Moses.

I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
Paul is not saying that the weak or correct, he is admonishing us to bear with them if we are strong in faith and not do things to harm their faith.

This is confirmed in Acts chapter 10 with Peter's vision.

(Act 10:13 NKJV) And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."
(Act 10:14 NKJV) But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."
(Act 10:15 NKJV) And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

And again in Galatians 4.

(Gal 4:9 NKJV) But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?
(Gal 4:10 NKJV) You observe days and months and seasons and years.
(Gal 4:11 NKJV) I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

These verses apply to both the Jewish holy days AND the pagan holy days and rituals of the Gentiles, for the Gentiles are a law unto themselves.

(Rom 2:14 KJV) For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:
(Rom 2:15 KJV) Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

Just try not keeping birthdays and holidays or not baptizing, and tithing; you'll find out quickly that the Gentiles defend their rituals just as vehemently as the Jews defended the Law of Moses.

Paul concludes chapter 14 with these verses about how we ought to handle such situations.

(Rom 14:20 NKJV) Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.
(Rom 14:21 NKJV) It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.
(Rom 14:22 NKJV) Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.
(Rom 14:23 NKJV) **But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.**

If we are strong we should not try to force our weaker brothers and sisters to stop keeping their traditions of the world or the Church that they cling to so tightly. We cannot say that these worldly traditions are good, because that would be denying Christ and the truth. Here is what Christ said about these things:

(Mar 7:5 NKJV) **Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him,** "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"
(Mar 7:6 NKJV) He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME.
(Mar 7:7 NKJV) AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.'
(Mar 7:8 NKJV) For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."
(Mar 7:9 NKJV) He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.

Christ did not go looking for the Pharisees, they always came to him and questioned him. Christ went looking for the lost sheep, like the Woman at the well who was a sinner and was in need of healing. We should not waste our time trying to convince the self righteous, we should only give them an answer when we are asked. We should seek out those that have a broken and contrite Spirit and feed them.

(Mar 2:16 NKJV) And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?"
(Mar 2:17 NKJV) When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "**Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.** I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Many of you have Pharisees living in your own homes and in your own family. You love your family and want them to see the truth, so you preach to them and are only casting your pearls before swine. Your are seeking out Pharisees when you should just turn them over to God and wait for him to seek an occasion against them.
Do go to the Pharisees as you have opportunity. Be an example, provide for them as the Lord commands, but do not continue to pound them with the Word of God, it is not profitable and will only make matters worse.

It all comes down to the measure of faith that we have been given by God, and Paul just told the Romans two chapters earlier that faith is given God.

(Rom 12:3 NKJV) For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

This is confirmed in Ephesians 2.

(Eph 2:8 NKJV) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,
(Eph 2:9 NKJV) not of works, lest anyone should boast.

We all naturally tend to despise or judge others that do not have our same measure of faith. The strong despise the weak and the weak judge the strong.

(Rom 14:3 NKJV) Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

The weak should respect the strong and the strong should bear with the weak.

(1Th 5:12 KJV) And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;
(1Th 5:13 KJV) And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

(Rom 15:1 KJV) We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.
(Rom 15:2 KJV) Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

As we live by every word we will be both strong and weak at times. When we get puffed up we will be humbled. We need to always remember that salvation is a process so that we have patience and compassion on others as they are drug to God.
We can be strong and weak both physically and spiritually. The Lord has granted some in the Body of Christ a larger measure of physical health, energy, intelligence, money, wisdom, scriptural knowledge, etc. Those that lack any of these things should be grateful that God has given us these brothers and sisters to provide for the Body. Do not envy them, just be grateful to God.

There are some in the Body that lack either physical or spiritually, and sometimes both. These members are very important and necessary to the health of the Body.

(1Co 12:20 NKJV) But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.
(1Co 12:21 NKJV) And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."
(1Co 12:22 NKJV) No, much rather, **those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.**
(1Co 12:23 NKJV) And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, **on these we bestow greater honor;** and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty,
(1Co 12:24 NKJV) but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,
(1Co 12:25 NKJV) that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

It is much more difficult to be a member in need of help than to be the member giving help.

(Act 20:35 NKJV) I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

We need to be especially considerate of the weaker members and realize how difficult and humbling it is to be in that position. God uses them to manifest love within the Body by bearing one another's burdens. So if you weak in any way and in need of help, do not be prideful and try to hide the need, and do not be ashamed. It is a work of God to humble you and will be uses as a blessing for the Body. Be grateful for his provision and express your gratitude often to those who are sent to minister to your needs. God will give you a widows mite to share or a talent or two to invest, do not despise what you have and bury it in the earth, use it well and you will be blessed.
We also must not compare ourselves against one another. We all have a different measure of faith and different talents, so all we can do is thank God for what we have and use it well.

(2Co 10:12 NKJV) For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

It is certainly good to be inspired by one another to love and good works and to follow each other's good example; that is very different that comparing ourselves.

(Heb 10:24 NKJV) And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,
(Heb 10:25 NKJV) not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

It requires mercy and compassion to see how each member fits into the Body and to happily bear one another's burdens. We have to realize how difficult each person's trials are for them. Everyone has to lose their life to be in this Body, so always remember that everyone's sufferings bring them to their wits end. If you experience their life you would be exactly where they are.

(Php 2:1 NKJV) Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,
(Php 2:2 NKJV) fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.
(Php 2:3 NKJV) Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.
(Php 2:4 NKJV) Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

If we are going to be used of God to win others to the true Gospel, we must have mercy and compassion on those who have not yet been given the ability to see or obey the truth.

(1Co 9:22 NKJV) to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

Becoming weak to the weak does not mean that we give up our strong meat and start disobeying Christ. It means that we have empathy and compassion
and relate to them right where they are because we ourselves have been at that very point. The details may be different, but the result is the same one event to all men.

(Jas 2:13 NKJV) For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

(Luk 6:45 NKJV) A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

There are certain things we say that make it obvious that we do not have mercy in our hearts and that we are self righteous.

For example:

- "I can't believe he did that, I would NEVER do such a thing."

Oh really, how do you know that? What if God took away your measure of faith and put you in a perfectly designed temptation to cause you to fall. Then would you be able to resist? Can you make war with the beast?

(Rev 13:4 NKJV) So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

When we start making arrogant statements like this God is sure to seek an occasion against us to humble us greatly. Paul was a self-righteous Pharisee, and God sought an occasion against him to make it clear that Paul of himself had no power at all to resist sin.

(Rom 7:14 NKJV) For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.
(Rom 7:15 NKJV) For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.
(Rom 7:16 NKJV) If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.
(Rom 7:17 NKJV) But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.
(Rom 7:18 NKJV) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.
(Rom 7:19 NKJV) For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.
(Rom 7:20 NKJV) Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.
(Rom 7:21 NKJV) I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.
(Rom 7:22 NKJV) For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.
(Rom 7:23 NKJV) But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.
(Rom 7:24 NKJV) O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?
(Rom 7:25 NKJV) I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

When you see someone else caught up in a sin don't ever shake your head and say, "I just don't understand how they could do such a thing".

If we are merciless towards others, God will judge us with that very same standard to teach us to love mercy.

(Mat 7:1 NKJV) "Judge not, that you be not judged.
(Mat 7:2 NKJV) For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

(Jas 2:13 NKJV) For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

It is a very narrow way to have mercy upon others, yet also not enable sin. For example if someone is irresponsible with money it will do no good to deliver them from their situation if they are not willing to make the necessary corrections to avoid having the same problem again. Until we repent God does not show mercy, he sends more fiery judgment to humble us and soften our hard heart. There is a time that we need to allow others to reap what they sow in order for them to learn from the experience. It's like a parent who continually delivers their children from bad decisions. They need to be corrected by the consequences of their own wickedness. However, when true repentance is present we need to be merciful and help each other out of the mess we find ourselves in.

Do not make these difficult decisions about helping others by yourself; get a multitude of counselors. Go to those you respect privately and get some advice before you act. It is very easy to harm a brother or sister by lacking mercy or by being too lenient and enabling sinful behavior.
(Pro 15:22 NKJV) Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established.

I have had grand plans to help others only to see them blow up in my face because I was too prideful to get counsel. I have been both too harsh at times and too lenient. I have the seen the destruction of both and pray to walk the narrow way now.

The scriptures tell us exactly why we do the evil that harms ourselves and others. When we deeply understand these verses our compassion and mercy will be increased.

(Rom 8:20 KJV) For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

(Joh 12:40 KJV) He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

If we do not understand that God is working this evil for good against our will, we will not be able to forgive from the heart. We will be bitter and self-righteous to our own destruction. We must be diligent to look for this bitterness and cast it out, lest it leaven the whole lump.

(Heb 12:15 KJV) Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

When we are bitter and unforgiving we are selling our birthright just as Esau did. We are trading in the fruit of the spirit for self-righteous bitterness and hatred. There is a temporary carnal satisfaction in hatred and bitterness, but it's end is surely death.

(Heb 12:16 KJV) Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.
(Heb 12:17 KJV) For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

The old man cannot repent, he must die. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, so that part of us must be burned up and replaced with the Spirit of God that has mercy, compassion, and quickly forgives.
Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

We will only be able to have mercy towards others to the extent that we understand how much mercy we have been shown ourselves.

Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

When the Spirit of God is ruling and reigning within our hearts and minds we will be able to do as Christ did, and ask the Father to forgive our enemies for the know not what they do.

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

And even if our brother sins against us and knows it is wrong, he simply lacks the self control to carry it out as we read about in Romans 7.

In John chapter 6 Christ says twice that the only way someone can accept the truth and come to the father is because the Father causes it. In the following verses they are having a discussion about who Christ is, and Christ is telling them spiritual things which are impossible for the carnally minded man to receive.

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw (drags) him: and I will raise him up at the last day.
Why should we non murmur? Because no one will come to Father without being dragged. Christ then really makes his point by making a statement that is complete and utter foolishness to the natural man.

(Joh 6:53 KJV) Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.
(Joh 6:54 KJV) Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

(Joh 6:60 NKJV) Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"
(Joh 6:61 NKJV) When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you?
(Joh 6:62 NKJV) What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?
(Joh 6:63 NKJV) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.
(Joh 6:64 NKJV) But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.
(Joh 6:65 NKJV) And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

Christ intentionally told them this hard saying to make the point that the only way to receive the truth is to be chosen by him and granted the gift. God intentionally designs impossible situations for the sole purpose of showing us that we are weak and unable to do what he says on our own.

When sharing the truth with others, we must always remember that they cannot receive anything we have to say if it is not granted to them by the Father. This will give us great patience and mercy, knowing that it is out of their control.

When we first learn how self-righteous and merciless we have been towards others, we tend to fall off of the other side of the road. We have so much compassion and empathy for the evil experience thrust on upon our fellow man that we say, "how can I judge anyone?". We become hesitant to point out evil and rebuke others for disobedience.

The scriptures are clear that we must admonish those in the body of Christ when we see them caught in a fault. The problem is that we don’t do it in the proper manner at first, we lack mercy and patience. However that
doesn't mean God wants us to stop pointing out sin, he just wants us to do it with love.

(Gal 6:1 NKJV) Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

We start off with a spirit of harshness and must be humbled to develop gentleness.

(1Th 5:14 NKJV) Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

If we do not exhort and warn others then we will have a chaotic and unruly house, just as a family that does not discipline the children.

I have done a thorough study on how to properly handle correction in the body of Christ. It is essential that we learn to have mercy and compassion, and then be diligent to admonish our fellow brothers and sisters in love.

http://tryingthespirits.com/body-of-christ/

In Ezekiel we are told that our job is to be a good watchman and warn the those in the body of Christ when an enemy is approaching to destroy us. If we neglect this duty we will reap what we sow and suffer for it.

(Eze 33:1 NKJV) Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
(Eze 33:2 NKJV) "Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman,
(Eze 33:3 NKJV) when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people,
(Eze 33:4 NKJV) then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head.
(Eze 33:5 NKJV) He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life.
(Eze 33:6 NKJV) But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.'
(Eze 33:7 NKJV) "So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me.

We'll conclude this study by reading about David and how he was judged for his great sin of committing adultery with Bathsheba and then murdering her husband Uriah to cover it up. The story of David was given to us as an example of these verses in Matthew:

(Mat 7:1 NKJV) "Judge not, that you be not judged.
(Mat 7:2 NKJV) For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.
(Mat 7:3 NKJV) And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?
(Mat 7:4 NKJV) Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?
(Mat 7:5 NKJV) Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

(2Sa 12:1 NKJV) Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor.
(2Sa 12:2 NKJV) The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds.
(2Sa 12:3 NKJV) But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him.
(2Sa 12:4 NKJV) And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."
(2Sa 12:5 NKJV) So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!
(2Sa 12:6 NKJV) And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."
(2Sa 12:7 NKJV) Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.
(2Sa 12:8 NKJV) I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!"
(2Sa 12:9 NKJV) Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon.

(2Sa 12:10 NKJV) Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'

(2Sa 12:11 NKJV) Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.

(2Sa 12:12 NKJV) For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.'"

(2Sa 12:13 NKJV) So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

(2Sa 12:14 NKJV) However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die."

(2Sa 12:15 NKJV) Then Nathan departed to his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill.

(2Sa 12:16 NKJV) David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground.

(2Sa 12:17 NKJV) So the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them.

(2Sa 12:18 NKJV) Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, "Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!"

(2Sa 12:19 NKJV) When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" And they said, "He is dead."

(2Sa 12:20 NKJV) So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate.

(2Sa 12:21 NKJV) Then his servants said to him, "What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food."

(2Sa 12:22 NKJV) And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?'"
(2Sa 12:23 NKJV) But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."
(2Sa 12:24 NKJV) Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon...