

The Commands of Yeshua ~ Part 12

Character ~ Part B

"Instead, clothe yourselves with the Lord Yeshua the Messiah; and don't waste your time thinking about how to provide for the sinful desires of your old nature." (Romans 13:14)

In my last post, we introduced the commands of Yeshua by looking at the character traits that Yeshua expects us to possess. We looked at His command to "walk in the light" and to "shine our light." In this post, we will look at His command to "be humble" and "be merciful."

3. Be Humble

"But you are not to let yourselves be called 'Rabbi'; because you have one Rabbi, and you are all each other's brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'Father,' because you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to let yourselves be called 'leaders,' because you have one Leader, and he is the Messiah! The greatest among you must be your servant, for whoever promotes himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be promoted." (Matthew 23:8-12).

This is one command that I have struggled with for most of my life. My name means world ruler and overcomer. With this knowledge, I have really struggled with being humble while at the same time becoming a servant-leader. I'm certainly not there yet, but am confident with His help; I will be able to embrace His command to "humble myself in the sight of the Lord."

Yeshua values humility. In the eyes of Yeshua, we are all on equal ground and none is above the other. We are all brothers and sisters, fellow travelers on the road, all walking together in the kingdom of God. It is OK to be honored by people if you have served them well, but to *expect* special treatment from others, or to desire to be served before everyone else, or to have the best seats in the house, or not to have to deal with restrictions other people must deal with is selfish and self-centered. If we are always looking to our own needs, then we are not conscious of others' needs. Paul reminds us, ***"Do nothing out of rivalry or vanity; but, in humility, regard each other as better than yourselves - look out for each other's interests and not just for your own."*** (Philippians 2:3-4)

This command reflects Yeshua's own actions and heart. Sha'ul demonstrated this aspect of leadership in his own ministry and admonished us: ***"Let your attitude toward one another be governed by your being in union with the Messiah Yeshua: Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God something to be possessed by force. On the contrary, he emptied himself, in that he took the form of a slave by becoming like human beings are. And when he appeared as a human being, he humbled himself still more by becoming obedient even to death — death on a stake as a criminal! Therefore God raised him to the highest place and gave him the name above every name; that in honor of the name given Yeshua, every knee will bow — in heaven, on earth and under the earth — and every tongue will acknowledge that Yeshua the Messiah is Adonai — to the glory of God the Father."*** (Philippians 2:5-11)

What is consistent about Yeshua's commands is that He doesn't just *command* us to humble ourselves, to serve one another, and to consider others as greater than ourselves; He actually *demonstrates* how to do it. Yeshua gave up position, authority, reputation, and power in obedience to the Father; and yet we question why someone else should receive more privileges than we do.

The principle behind the command is that those who are courageous enough to humble themselves before others have the good character and moral fiber God can trust to lead others. Those who demand subservience from others have let pride and selfish ambition corrupt their character. They show contempt

toward others and can in no way represent the heart of God. Yeshua tells us that, *"How blessed are the meek for they will inherit the Land!"* (Matthew 5:5)

Application: Yeshua wants all His brothers and sisters to have a family resemblance. He does not want His people to look like the world because we no longer belong to the kingdom of this world. Being humble is a reflection of Yeshua in us. We no longer need to draw attention to ourselves, but we love to draw attention to Yeshua who saved us, transformed us, and now lives in us.

4. Be Merciful

"Show compassion, just as your Father shows compassion." (Luke 6:36)

"How blessed are those who show mercy! for they will be shown mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

Showing mercy is a reflection of the heart of God. Grace is giving us what we do not deserve. Mercy, in essence, is withholding the punishment we rightly deserve. When we are merciful to others, we are acting like God acts. *"Adonai is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in grace."* (Psalm 103:8)

- When the angel of God took Lot and his wife by the hand and forced them out of the city before Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed by fire, God showed them mercy (see Genesis 19:16).
- When Sha'ul and Silas told their Philippian jailor to put away his sword and do himself no harm, they showed mercy toward their abuser (see Acts 16:28).
- When David had opportunity to take his revenge upon Saul's life but chose not to, he showed mercy (see 1 Samuel 24:7).
- When the rich master chose to forgive the debt of his servant rather than casting him into debtor's prison, he showed mercy (see Matthew 18:27).
- When Yeshua chose not to request twelve legions of angels to protect Him from being unjustly arrested by a mob who eventually crucified Him, he showed mercy (see Matthew 26:53).
- When God met with Moshe on Mount Sinai, He declared that He wants to be known as a God who shows goodness and truth, grace and mercy, and who is long-suffering. See Exodus 34:5-8.

Mercy is such a part of who God is that when He had a container made to hold the most precious and holy items belonging to His people (the Ark of the Covenant), He had a special lid made to cover the top of the ark.

"You are to make a cover for the ark out of pure gold; it is to be three-and-three-quarters feet long and two-and-a-quarter feet high...You are to put the ark-cover on top of the ark. Inside the ark you will put the testimony that I am about to give you. There I will meet with you. I will speak with you from above the ark-cover, from between the two k'ruvim which are on the ark for the testimony, about all the orders I am giving you for the people of Isra'el." (Exodus 25:17, 21-22)

The place where God would come down to meet with His people was named the **"Mercy Seat,"** comparable to the "throne of grace" spoken of in Hebrews. *"Therefore, let us confidently approach the throne from which God gives grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace in our time of need."* (Hebrews 4:16) Showing mercy to others implies that you have the power to do otherwise, but choose instead to be merciful and forgive. God chose to provide us with a way to have our sins forgiven through repentance and faith in His Son. We, too, have the means by which we can forgive others when they sin against us and to release them from any obligation to us. Why does Yeshua command us to be merciful toward others? Because He was merciful toward us.

We read in the account of a Gentile named Cornelius that he was a merciful person. As Cornelius was praying, an angel appeared to Him. *"Cornelius stared at the angel, terrified. 'What is it, sir?' he asked. 'Your prayers,' replied the angel, 'and your acts of charity have gone up into God's presence, so that he has you on his mind.'"* (Acts 10:4) What we do in mercy toward others is stored up and presented to God Himself. God notices those who please Him. He rewards those who demonstrate His heart toward others. To be merciful is not only met with great relief to people but is building a monument of kindness before God.

Application: When was the last time you showed someone mercy? Was it to your husband or wife? Was it to your friend or your children? Was it to a relative or someone in the church or at work? Mercy is withholding a punishment, criticism, or rebuke that is rightfully deserved. Choosing to show mercy is choosing to care more for who the person is than what the person has done. This is pleasing to Yeshua.

Remember always the words of Yeshua: *"If you love me, you will keep my commands."* (Yochanan 14:15)

In my next post, we will continue in this mini-series on the character traits that Yeshua expects us to possess by looking at judging not and freely giving.