DOVER DAILY DEVOTIONAL:

On Sunday we considered the fall of Israel in 2 Kings 17:1–41 and the warning it gives us about mistaking God's patience for His permission. We saw how the idols we trust change us, how religious activity can conceal a divided heart, and why yesterday's faithfulness cannot substitute for today's obedience. Yet we also heard the good news that Jesus Christ bore the judgment our sins deserved to bring us to God. This week we will consider what we are doing with that mercy, asking the Lord to lead us into honest repentance, faithful worship, and wholehearted love for Him.

Monday: The Kindness That Calls Us Home

Scripture Reading: Romans 2:1–5

We can grow accustomed to a mercy we receive every day. We wake up, go about our work, and find that life continues much as it did yesterday. Even when we know there is something we need to confess or put right, it is easy to assume that tomorrow will give us another opportunity. God's patience becomes the very thing we use to justify our delay.

That is why Paul asks us to consider the purpose of God's kindness. The Lord gives us time to repent. When His Word troubles our conscience, He is telling us the truth about a danger we need to take seriously. Israel heard that truth for generations, but hearing the warning did them no good while they refused to believe it.

Now, we should not hear this as an invitation to make ourselves worthy before coming to Christ. We come because we are guilty and need His mercy. Jesus gave His life for sinners, and His resurrection assures us that the Savior to whom we turn is living and able to save. There is no need to wait until we have a better record to bring Him.

Perhaps you already know where obedience needs to begin. There is an apology you have been avoiding, a dishonest practice you have been defending, or a habit you keep promising to address. Bring it honestly before the Lord. Ask for His help, and take the step His Word makes clear. The kindness you have received today is reason enough to turn to Him today.

Reflection Questions

1. What have you been putting off because you assume there will be another opportunity?

2. How has God's Word recently corrected or troubled your conscience?

3. What specific step of repentance can you take today in dependence on Christ?

Prayer

Father, thank You for the patience You have shown me. Forgive me for using Your kindness as an excuse to delay obedience. Thank You that Jesus receives sinners who come to Him in repentance and faith. By Your Spirit, help me confess honestly and obey what You have made clear. Amen.

Tuesday: Will We Listen?

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 17:13–14

Israel's trouble was deeper than a shortage of information. The Lord had sent prophets and seers to tell His people what He required. They heard His commands and His warnings, but they refused to listen. Scripture traces their stubbornness to unbelief. They knew what God had said and still lived as though His words could safely be disregarded.

That should make us careful about how we hear Scripture. We may know a passage well enough to explain it to someone else while resisting the very thing it requires of us. We can agree that Christians should forgive, speak truthfully, and care for others, then find reasons why our own circumstances ought to be an exception. Familiarity with God's Word does not keep us from arguing with it.

Thankfully, Jesus was faithful in every place where we have resisted the Father. His obedience and His death are the ground of our acceptance with God. When He brings us into fellowship with the Father, He also gives His Spirit to teach us to receive the Word we once resisted. We can ask for a willing heart because our Savior has not left us to change ourselves.

As you read today, resist the urge to think first about who else needs this warning. Consider what the Lord is saying to you. If His Word exposes resentment, admit it. If it calls you to generosity, consider whose need you can

meet. Receiving correction may be uncomfortable, but the God who speaks is the God who sent His Son to bring you home.

Reflection Questions

1. Which clear command of Scripture have you been treating as though your circumstances excuse you from it?

2. How do you usually respond when someone faithfully brings God's Word to bear on your conduct?

3. What would receiving God's correction look like in one relationship today?

Prayer

Lord, I confess that I often prefer agreement to correction. Forgive me for knowing Your Word while resisting its authority over my life. Thank You for the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ and the mercy I have in Him. Give me a teachable heart, and help me receive Your truth with faith. Amen.

Wednesday: What Our Hearts Are Becoming

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 17:7–15

Before describing Israel's rebellion, Scripture reminds us that the Lord had brought them out of Egypt. The God they abandoned was the God who had rescued them from slavery. Their worship of other gods was a betrayal of the One whose goodness they had already received. Remembering His redemption helps us understand how serious their sin had become.

Then verse 15 tells us that they went after false idols and became false. What they worshiped changed them. We can see the same thing in ordinary life. When approval becomes too precious, we begin telling people what they want to hear. When comfort rules our decisions, another person's need begins to feel like an unreasonable demand. Things that may be good in their proper place become cruel masters when we ask them to give us what only God can give.

Consider, then, the mercy of belonging to Jesus Christ. He gave Himself to free us from sin's dominion, and He is patient with His people as He teaches us to love what is good. We do not earn that freedom by identifying every disordered desire. We bring those desires to the Savior who has already paid the price of our

redemption.

Look at what happens when something you value is threatened. Does criticism make you dishonest? Does an interruption make you unkind? Those reactions can help you see where your trust has wandered. Confess what the Lord shows you, then ask Him to help you love Him and your neighbor in that particular situation. He knows how deeply sin reaches, and His grace reaches deeper still.

Reflection Questions

1. What loss or disappointment most readily leads you into sinful anger, fear, or dishonesty?

2. How has pursuing approval, comfort, or possessions affected the way you treat someone close to you?

3. How can remembering Christ's redemption help you entrust that desire to Him today?

Prayer

Father, You have been good to me, yet my heart so easily seeks its security elsewhere. Forgive me for trusting Your gifts more than I trust You. Thank You that Jesus gave Himself to redeem me from slavery to sin. Through Your Spirit, reorder my loves and teach me to serve the people You place before me. Amen.

Thursday: The Faith We Pass Along

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 17:40–41

The last verse of this chapter is a sorrowful one. The people served their carved images, their children did likewise, and their children's children followed the same pattern. A divided loyalty had become an inherited way of life. What one generation made peace with became familiar to the next.

We ought to consider what our own example teaches. Children notice whether we can admit that we were wrong. New believers notice whether older Christians receive correction graciously. People may hear us speak about trusting God and then watch us treat every inconvenience as though He has forgotten us. None of us lives without influence, though we often have less awareness of that influence than we should.

Now, our hope for those who follow us cannot rest in giving them a flawless example. We need the same Savior they need. Jesus Christ alone can forgive sins and make hearts new. Neither a godly family nor a faithful church can do His saving work for Him. Yet He graciously uses ordinary believers who speak His truth, acknowledge their failures, and keep returning to His mercy.

If you have set a poor example, you can begin by admitting it. An honest apology may give someone a clearer picture of repentance than years spent protecting your reputation. Pray for the people who learn from you, and speak plainly about the Christ on whom you depend. We honor those who taught us faithfully by continuing in that faith and helping others come to the same Savior.

Reflection Questions

1. Who regularly learns something about the Christian life by watching you?

2. Is there a sinful habit you have made seem ordinary or acceptable to that person?

3. What honest conversation, apology, or act of faithfulness could point them toward Christ this week?

Prayer

Father, thank You for those who have taught me to know and trust You. Forgive the ways my example has obscured the goodness of Your ways. Have mercy on those who learn from me, and bring them to faith in Jesus Christ. Give me humility to admit my failures and grace to walk faithfully before them. Amen.

Friday: A Heart Made New

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 30:6–10

The people settled in Samaria were willing to acknowledge the Lord's power while continuing to serve their own gods. They wanted protection from judgment, but they intended to keep their former loyalties. Their religion made room for God without surrendering the heart to Him. It is a troubling picture because we can recognize something of ourselves in it.

We may ask God to bless a relationship while refusing to confess the pride that is hurting it. We may want peace of conscience while protecting the habit that

troubles our conscience. The problem reaches beyond our outward conduct. We need to love the Lord, and we cannot give ourselves a new heart simply by making stronger promises.

That is why God's promise in Deuteronomy is such good news. He promises to deal with His people's stubborn hearts so that they will love Him. Through Jesus Christ, we receive forgiveness and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. The Savior who reconciles us to the Father also begins changing our desires. Our obedience grows from grace we have received.

This work is often painful, and Christians still struggle with sin. But when you grieve over what you once defended and ask for help to forsake it, do not dismiss that struggle as proof that nothing has changed. Bring it to Christ. Ask Him for an undivided heart, and use the help He provides through Scripture, prayer, and the care of His people. He is able to teach you to love what you cannot yet seem to love.

Reflection Questions

1. Where have you been asking for God's help while resisting His authority?

2. What sin do you now grieve that you once excused, and how might that encourage dependence on His grace?

3. Whom could you ask to pray with you as you seek wholehearted obedience?

Prayer

Lord, You know the divided desires of my heart. Forgive me for seeking Your blessing while holding back my obedience. Thank You that Jesus reconciles sinners to You and gives His Spirit to change them. Do what I cannot do for myself, and teach me to love You with my whole heart. Amen.

Saturday: Brought Near Through Christ

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 3:18

Israel's exile brings us face to face with the seriousness of sin. The people were removed from the land, just as the Lord had warned. Their long history of religious privilege could not remove their guilt, and the passage of time had not made God's warnings any less true. We need to reckon with that judgment if we

are to understand the mercy of the gospel.

Peter tells us that Christ suffered for sins to bring us to God. Consider what that means. The righteous Son willingly bore the judgment deserved by unrighteous people. He died and rose again so that sinners who had turned away from God could be reconciled to Him. The Savior has dealt with the guilt that no amount of religious activity could remove.

If you belong to Christ, you can confess your failures without wondering whether His sacrifice will be sufficient this time. Your acceptance rests upon His finished work. That assurance gives you reason to stop hiding. The Father to whom you come has already given His Son for you, and the Spirit who exposes your sin also helps you turn from it.

As we prepare to gather for worship again, consider anything you have been reluctant to bring into the light. Confess it to the Lord, and seek forgiveness from anyone you have wronged. If you have never trusted Christ, come to Him in repentance and faith. He saves sinners to bring them to God, and fellowship with Him is far better than the sin we are so afraid to surrender.

Reflection Questions

1. What does Christ's purpose of bringing you to God reveal about the mercy He offers?

2. Is fear of rejection keeping you from confessing something honestly to the Lord?

3. How can you prepare for worship by receiving His mercy and seeking reconciliation today?

Prayer

Father, thank You for sending Your righteous Son to suffer for unrighteous people like me. Forgive me for hiding the sins that Christ died to cleanse. Help me rest in His finished work and come to You with honesty and trust. Prepare my heart to worship You with Your people and to receive Your Word gladly. Amen.