

"Blessed Are The Merciful"

Introduction. As we proceed in our study of the beatitudes, we are again going to notice a slight change. The first four beatitudes look toward God, and the next three toward men. Mercifulness, purity of heart, and peacemaking are virtues which mark the Christian as to be congratulated. In a sense we have so far been looking at the Christian in terms of their need. But now we examine the reaction which results from all that has come before. Many feel that this is the most appealing of the beatitudes.

We must also notice that as we go through the beatitudes, they are more searching and humbling than the previous ones. When we compare ourselves against these beatitudes, we can see what we are in the light of God's pattern for the Christian (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:12). We absolutely must realize that His word controls us, not the other way around! We cannot think of ourselves as natural people trying to control our attitudes and trying to be Christian only in certain ways. Faith is not a veneer (2 Corinthians 5:14). Veneer is a very thin layer of something, usually an exotic type of wood, that covers a more common type of wood. Its purpose is to make cheaper wood look better and more appealing. You cannot be a "veneer" Christian. The gospel has not been revealed for surface application; its purpose is to effect the core of our existence. We profess our faith by the way we act, and these beatitudes show us exactly what we are and what we are to be.

I. **"Blessed Are The Merciful"**

- A. The meaning of mercy is "pity, especially on account of misery." Thayer defines mercy as "good will towards the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them." Mercy is a spirit of kindness which sympathizes with the sufferings of the afflicted (Matthew 15:22; 17:14-15). It is more than a feeling; it is a life-guiding principle (1 John 3:16-18).
- B. Mercy is one of the attributes of God (2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 2:4; Titus 3:5). God delights in exercising His mercy (Exodus 34:6; Ezekiel 33:11; 1 Timothy 2:4; Hebrews 8:12; 2 Peter 3:9). Since God is merciful and we are exhorted to imitate His character, it is no wonder that we are told to be merciful (Luke 6:36). Chrysostom said, "Mercy imitates God and disappoints Satan."
- C. The words grace and mercy are often confused or thought to be the same, but there is a definite difference between the two terms.
 1. Grace is "kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved." With God, grace comes first, for grace makes way for mercy (Genesis 6:3; Romans 3:24; 5:2, 20-21). The mercy of God is demonstrated by graciously offering men salvation in Christ through faith.

2. Mercy is always associated with men in their misery and grace is always associated with men in their sins. One extends relief and the other pardon. Mercy is to count another's misery as one's own, and to be sad at another's grief as one's own (Romans 12:15).
- D. The Lord's use of "merciful" encompasses both the general and the extended use of the word; i.e., blessed are those who show compassion on the suffering and those who forgive those who trespass against them. Therefore, the quality of a Christian's mercy finds expression in several ways.
1. In deeds of helpfulness (Hebrews 10:34; James 2:14-17).
 - a) Helping a sinner to find and obey Christ is one of the greatest acts of mercy we can show them.
 - b) We have tasted manna from heaven -- keep it a secret and we lose it; hoard it and it will rot (cf. Exodus 16:13-20).
 2. In kindness of judgment (John 7:24; 1 Corinthians 13:7; cf. Revelation 12:10).
 3. In forgiveness (Romans 12:20-21; Ephesians 4:32). We cannot rid the sinner of his guilt, but we can forgive his sins against us (Matthew 9:12-13).
- E. Mercy is not just a desire to relieve -- it is a fulfillment of that desire.
1. It is actualized.
 - a) The good Samaritan was moved with compassion when he saw the man beaten by robbers, but this would not have helped the man (Luke 10:33).
 - b) Only in his work of mercy was helped rendered. Said another way, more than feeling sorry for him was needed.
 - c) Jesus also provided us great illustrations of mercy in His ministry (Matthew 9:27-29, 35-38; 23:37; Luke 7:11-15; John 11:35; Hebrews 2:17).
 2. It is personalized.
 - a) While toward people in general, it is toward the person himself (Luke 18:13). It is possible to feel pity for mankind in general, while at the same time not feel that the distressed person himself deserves mercy.
 - b) One may feel that the individual is worthy of contempt. But we have to see beyond the sin to the sinner themselves. Everyone who is not a Christian is in a state of sin and is to be pitied.
 3. It is unlimited (1 Thessalonians 5:15). Mercy is a continuous function of the disciple of Jesus, not the response of a specific situation.
 4. It is universal (Galatians 6:2, 10). Mercy is extended to a penitent sinner regardless of the color of their skin or the severity of their offenses.

II. **"For They Shall Obtain Mercy"**

- A. The merciful have received mercy (Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3-4). Only one who has experienced this kind of mercy can extend true mercy to others (Luke 17:3-4).
 - 1. Every failure to grant mercy to others reveals a failure to understand and appreciate, and for that matter, remember the mercy a Christian has received from God.
 - 2. In Matthew 18:23-35, it did not matter whether it was ten million dollars or twenty dollars; the failure to extend what was received condemned that man!
- B. In a sense, the Christian stands in the middle of receiving mercy (Colossians 3:13) and needing mercy (Luke 6:37). Whatever a man sows, he will reap (2 Samuel 22:26-27; Psalm 18:25-26). The merciful Christian can face God in the judgment without fear (Matthew 25:34-36).
- C. "Blessed" or to be congratulated are those who, after recognizing their spiritual poverty, mourning over their sins (and the sins of others), are meek, and who hunger and thirst after righteousness, cannot help but be merciful in dealing with others as God deals with them (cf. Matthew 7:2; James 2:13).

Conclusion. Having received mercy from the Lord, the saved sinner exercises mercy to others, proving that a good man will seek to do good. An anonymous proverb says, "God gives His anger by weight but His mercy without measure." Are you merciful? Are you sorry for every sinner even though that sinner offends you? Do you have any pity on people who have been servants of Satan? You were once there yourself, and your constant need for mercy from God's hand is incentive enough that on the infrequent occasions where we are asked to extend mercy to others, we will do so speedily and cheerfully.

When Alexander the Great besieged a city, he used to set up a light to give notice to those within that, if they came to him while the light shined, they would be spared. If they did not, they received no mercy. God sets up light after light, and waits year after year, inviting people to come to Him so they can have eternal life. The day of death and judgment is an awful day, and if we want mercy then we must seek it from the Lord. One day we will appear before the judgment seat (2 Corinthians 5:10), and we will need mercy for our sins (Romans 3:23; Hebrews 4:15-16).