

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

Matthew 5:7

The Beatitudes represent character qualities given to believers by the Holy Spirit. Spiritually-minded believers know that their ultimate sense of well-being and real happiness comes from possessing and cultivating spiritual qualities derived from a close relationship to their Savior. The first four Beatitudes focus on the development of inward qualities toward God, whereas the next four are more outward and directed toward man. In the above verse, Jesus tells us that the fifth Beatitudes, **mercy**, will bless others and be a blessing to those who extend it.

God is a **merciful** God (*Exodus 34:60*) and His followers are to be **merciful** (*Luke 6:36*). In some translations the word **mercy** is translated as “*lovingkindness*” (*Psalms 63:3*), *compassion* (*Isaiah 14:1*), *kindness* (*Micah 6:8*), and *sympathy* (*Job 2:11*).

The **merciful** are those who not only express kindness, compassion and sympathy, but also actively assist those in need. The word *sympathy* comes from two Greek words, *sun* - which means *together with* and *pentho* which means *to experience or suffer*. Therefore, *sympathy* means *experiencing things together with another person*. A. W. Pink states, “*This mercy is something more than a feeling: it is an operative principle. It not only stirs the heart, but it moves the hand to render help to those in need...*”

Ungrateful people tend to focus on themselves, become insensitive to the needs of others, insulating themselves from the pain and hardships of others. Focusing on oneself does not allow room for humble, kind, and compassionate thoughts which translate into serving the needs of others.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites interpreted the command to “*love your neighbor*” (*Leviticus 19:18b*) to apply only to fellow Israelites. However, Jesus enlarged the application of **mercy** and love to everyone---family, friends, strangers, as well as enemies (*Matthew 6:33-36*). Extending **mercy** to someone in need is not predicated on whether it is convenient for us, but in response to a need. We see **mercy** in action when Christ went to the cross to pay for our sins. Instead of condemnation and death, we received **mercy**, forgiveness and new life (*1 Peter 1:3*).

In extending **mercy**, we are not to take into consideration a wrong that may have been done, but come to the aid of the one in need. As we read in *Hebrews 8:12*, “*For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more*” and in *James 2:13*, “*For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*” Jesus gave us a great example of this in His handling of the woman caught in adultery in *John 8:3-11*. Jesus never said they were wrong to think she deserved death. He appoints her executioners, those without sin, but there was only one without sin, Jesus himself. However, instead of meting out judgment, He extends **mercy**.

We see **mercy** both extended and withheld in the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:30-37*). Both a priest and a Levite passed by a man who had been stripped, beaten and left for dead

by a gang of robbers, but their hearts remained unmoved. Then a Samaritan came by and when he saw the injured man his heart was moved with compassion. He immediately took action by dressing his wounds, taking him to an inn and seeing that he was cared for.

Christ followers should show **mercy** because they have received mercy. **Mercy** grows in us as a result of having a close, personal relationship with our **merciful** God (*Psalms 37:21; 86:15*). When we are filled with Christ's love, we will reach out with a heart of **mercy** to those in need (*Colossians 3:12-13*). Hurting people need to know there are believers who will extend **mercy**, not just a "hang in there" (*James 2:15-16*). **Model Jesus!** When His friends were confused, fearful and hurting, He didn't give them a lecture or a formula for right living, He gave them Himself (*Acts 20:19-22*). When we show **mercy** by caring for and meeting physical and emotional needs, we will open the door to meeting their spiritual needs (*1Thessalonians 2:8*).

Jesus promises that those who extend **mercy** will receive **mercy**. The same principle is taught by Paul in Galatians 6:7 where we read, "*Don't be misled; remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it: a man will always reap just the kind of crop he sows!* A farmer doesn't sow corn and expect to reap soy beans. If we act in mercy, kindness and compassion, we will receive the same.

Three benefits of extending **mercy** to others are: (1) we will be saved from ourselves by focusing our interests on others, (2) we will be kept from mental and emotional breakdowns caused by anxiety, anger, bitterness and unforgiveness in personal relationships, and (3) we will experience God's presence and the blessings of living in fellowship with Him.

I encourage you to meditate on what it means and what it will take for you to develop a heart of **mercy**. Ponder on this verse: "*He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God*" (*Micah 6:8*).

Prayer:

Father, your mercy knows no bounds. Touch my heart so that I am not so focused on my own dreams, ambitions and goals that I fail to see the needy in my world. Help me to respond with the same mercy the Lord Jesus showed those who were in need of kindness, compassion and forgiveness.

Be merciful, because He is merciful.

Dave Dagwell

Assistant to the President