

*oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.*" [Proverbs 14:31]

6. What does the presence or absence of mercy reveal?

The absence of this grace in a person reveals he is still in his sins. The presence reveals we have obtained mercy, and this is the outcome, that we show it to others as a result. Listen to the Scriptures: *"The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.* [Psalm 37:21] *"We love him, because he first loved us."* [1 John 4:19]

It is interesting to note that one of the things about Judas Iscariot was that he was lacking **mercy**. You remember how he criticized Mary at Bethany when she anointed Jesus with expensive perfume. He said, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor?" He did not care for the poor, for he was a thief and took money from the bag. Psalm 109 says this about Judas, *"Because that he remembered **not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor**"*.

7. In what ways is it true that the merciful will receive mercy?

It is not a way of earning God's mercy, for it is the result of having experienced God's mercy. As A.W. Pink explains, "Our acts of mercy are not meritorious in the sight of God: had that been the case, Christ had said, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain justice,' for what is meritorious is due reward by right".

Exercising mercy does have therapeutic value as Proverbs 11:17 states, *"The merciful man doeth good to his own soul:"* There can be material blessings, as is stated in Proverbs 28:27 *"He who gives to the poor will lack nothing"*. Finally, the promise of mercy has an eternal dimension. If we have shown mercy, that means we have experienced mercy and can look forward to it in the last judgment. *"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."* [Jude 1:21]

Let us each examine ourselves in the light of these words of the Lord. Are we merciful? Do we readily forgive injuries? Do we have compassion to those in misery, as God's providence brings such into our path? Have we pity for those who are lost? Is our religion characterized by deeds of mercy or is it all talk? May the Holy Spirit apply this message to each heart. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. AMEN.

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**BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST**

*Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America*

*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)*



### BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Looking at the Beatitudes with which our Lord begins the Sermon on the Mount. We come now to the fifth beatitude, *"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."* [Matthew 5:7] We will look at this beatitude by asking and answering a series of questions.

1. What is mercy?

Our Lord made it clear in the parable of the two debtors that not to forgive another will mean we have never been forgiven. He also taught us to pray in Matthew 6, *"forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"* [vs.12] and he went on to say; *"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses".*[vs.15] So it is important for us to know what mercy is. It does not mean that we are not to judge anyone. This would contradict other Scriptures where we are called upon to judge the true from the false. Take such Scriptures as these: *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."* [1 John 4:1] *"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."* [Matthew 7:20]

God is supremely merciful, but it does not mean He does not judge sin. Mercy is never at the expense of justice. So mercy cannot mean tolerating sin. One person defined mercy as a **sense of pity for someone suffering, with action to relieve it**. Maybe an illustration or two would help to make it clear.

Take first the parable of the Good Samaritan, which was given in response to the question, 'Who is my neighbor?' [Luke 10:30-37]. The Samaritan proved to be a neighbor to the man who had been attacked by the robbers, while the priest and Levite passed by. When Jesus asked who proved to be a neighbor to this man, the expert in the law answered, 'The one who had mercy on him [v.37]'. Note, the others might have felt pity for him, but it did not lead to any action to relieve the man.

The second example of mercy is when man had fallen by rebelling against God, and had incurred God's judgment. God did not leave man in his fallen state to perish, but sent His Son to suffer and die in their place, that He may deliver them from sin and its consequences. God did not overlook sin, but made satisfaction for it by the death of His beloved Son. The cross is where justice and mercy kissed each other. Mercy here led to the greatest sacrifice in order to redeem man from his pitiable state.

Though we cannot make atonement for another's sin, yet if we have received mercy we will seek to show mercy by seeking the best for one in need. This means not only to relieve his sufferings, but to seek that the person be saved from his sins, which is the cause of all sufferings.

**2.** Why should anyone show mercy? What are the motives?

We should show mercy because we have received mercy. Only the believer understands this, for only he has experienced God's mercy. He knows how many times he offends God in a single day, and is forgiven, how then can he not forgive others who offend him? Another reason why he should show mercy is that in this way he imitates His heavenly Father. "*That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*" [Matthew 5:45] "*Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*" [1 Timothy 1:13]

Albert Barnes writes, "Nowhere do we imitate God more than in showing mercy". This mercy is not **passive**, but active. God's mercy is not the overlooking of sin, but an active intervention to deal with it, by the offering up of His beloved Son unto death! "*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*" [Romans 8:32] "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" [John 3:16]

**3.** How does biblical mercy differ from the general kindness which even unbelievers exercise?

We see the pouring out of kindness and relief during the disasters caused by the hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the Gulf States in the United States. But as John Blanchard points out, it is care only for the bodily needs, not the spiritual. So many confuse the physical relief given with mercy, and often think this will qualify them to enter heaven. All such persons will be greatly shocked on the Day of Judgment, for if one could enter heaven by good deeds, then there would have been no need for the death of Christ. Besides, Scriptures makes it abundantly clear that all our righteous deeds are as filthy rags, when brought in to justify us before God (Isaiah 64:6).

John Stott writes: "Naturally if we had to choose between evangelism and compassionate service, we would have to agree that the spiritual and the eternal have a higher priority than the material and the temporal. But we don't have to choose, or very seldom". In contrast, the world does not care about the spiritual at all but it is only concerned with relieving the physical. It is interesting in the Scriptures you always have **preaching and teaching** preceding healing: "*And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*" [Matthew 9:35]

**4.** To whom should we show mercy?

Now in the world, people show kindness to those who show kindness to them. Is that to be our guide in showing mercy? No! Mercy, according to Scripture, is to be shown to **all men**. It is not even limited to men, it even extends to animals in terms of physical relief. However in relation to men, it is more than mere physical relief, but going on to seek their spiritual welfare. We are to forgive those who offend us, and seek to win them to Christ. "*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*" [Galatians 6:10] "*Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.*" [Psalm 82:3] "*A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*" [Proverbs 12:10]

So the apostle Paul regarded himself a debtor to the Jew and Greek as far as the gospel was concerned for he had obtained God's mercy. All who belong to Christ show that by seeking to win the lost for Him. When was the last time you shared the message of the Gospel with anyone? Is there anyone you have not forgiven, who has sought it from you? If so, you need to repent, for it shows an attitude that is not fit for a child of God.

**5.** How do we go about showing mercy?

You remember the question Peter put to our Lord, "How many times must I forgive my brother when he sins against me?" [Matthew 18:21] Peter was willing to forgive seven times, four more than the rabbis required. Yet he was told he had to forgive seventy times seven that is you are not to keep a count.

It is sad to see that even among professing Christians there is this lack of forgiveness. Many are in the same denomination or church and will not speak to each other. How does this square with Jesus' teaching? It does not. We need to repent of such an unforgiving spirit, before we find ourselves on the left hand of Christ at the judgment.

Not only do we show mercy in forgiving wrongs committed against us, but also by positively bringing the Gospel to the lost, so that they may be saved. When we fail to do that, we are secretly wishing them to perish in their sins. We are to do good even for our enemies, and what is better than to see them saved! This means we pray for our enemies, that God would work in them so that our words find reception in their hearts.

Not only should we be ready to forgive and to seek their salvation; but we should do them good which may lead them to repentance. God sends His rain on the good and the evil. So we are to do kindness even to those who oppose us. So the believing wife is told to win her husband by her deeds, without preaching to him. So let us do good, so that men may glorify our heavenly Father. Let us defend those who are weak and poor and fatherless and in this manner manifest whose we are. "*Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.*" [Psalm 82:3] "*He that*