

Blessed are the Merciful
Matthew 5:7 with 5:38-64
By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 4-11-2010

Introduction

We have been seeing that the Beatitudes are a call to enjoy kingdom living to the fullest. The chief end of man is to glorify God *and to enjoy Him forever*. And as Billy Sunday said, if we are losing our joy, there is a leak in our Christianity somewhere. And this beatitude highlights one of the biggest leaks of joy in most Christian lives. Instead of being happy, people allow themselves to get bitter. And the more bitter they get, the less likely they are to extend mercy. And as they withhold mercy, others react against them, which brings on even more negative emotions, which makes them even less likely to extend mercy. It is a downward spiral into misery. Of course, we will be seeing that it is not just our flesh that can take advantage of our lack of mercy – so does the world, and so does our adversary, the devil. So if you want the joy of kingdom living that the beatitudes promise, then this is a beatitude that we all need to carefully put into practice.

I. This Beatitude Does Not Teach Salvation By Works

A. The order of the beatitudes argues against salvation by works

Unfortunately, one interpretation of this beatitude given by Roman Catholics is almost guaranteed to rob you of your joy. I have one messed up commentary that says that it is only through our acts of mercy that we can hope to escape final judgment. And the implication is that our mercy earns God's salvation. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Verse 3 says that when we come to God as poor beggars with absolutely nothing in our hands, God gives us the kingdom of heaven. From that moment on we have every spiritual resource that we need in our bank account in heaven – and that would include the spiritual resource of mercy. So we are only giving in this verse what God has enabled us to give. We can't take these beatitudes out of order.

And someone might respond, "But even if God helps us, it is still so clear here – '**blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.**'" Is that not teaching salvation by grace plus works? Roman Catholics have said that this verse proves that your good works and acts of mercy are involved in your justification. Never mind that it doesn't use the word justification here,

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and never mind that Paul explicitly excludes works as the means of receiving justification.¹ But they insist that justification deals with God's mercy, and if you are not merciful, you will not obtain mercy. According to this interpretation, your mercy merits God's continuing salvation.

And my quick response is that if you look at the exposition that Jesus gives of this beatitude you will see that He is calling *sons of God* to acts of mercy. For example, in verse 45 Jesus speaks of God as "**your Father,**" verse 47 speaks of "**your brethren,**" verse 48 speaks of "**your Father,**" and he keeps speaking of them as saved people who pray to a loving heavenly Father. And yet Jesus will say to these saved sons, "**If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**" And so it brings the Roman Catholic counter-argument that we will never know that we are justified unless we persevere.

What's going on here? Well, it's the difference between God the Judge dealing with enemies, and God the Father dealing with wayward sons who need discipline. We don't just need mercy once in our lives when we face God as a judge. We need mercy every day as we face the discipline of a loving Father. That's why Jeremiah says that His mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-23). That's why David says, "**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**" God is so patient, so kind, and so merciful to us.

Can you see that? He's not telling pagans how to become sons. That's what verse 3 does. Verse 3 says that we can't offer anything to God to earn our salvation. We are beggars who are absolutely destitute, so there is no mercy we can offer to Him to earn His mercy. Our mercy must imitate His mercy. And when we do, God pours forth more mercy.

If you take the beatitudes in the order that they are given, they show that you cannot earn the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is given to beggars as a gift of grace. And God's grace produces growth that makes us mourn over sin (verse 4), makes us willing to be tamed by God and trained by our coach as we realize that we aren't very good skaters (verse 5), which in turn makes us hunger more and more to be like our coach (verse 6). And

¹ Roman Catholics deny immediate imputation of Christ's righteousness, opting instead for the mediate imputation of His righteousness. By mediate imputation they mean that it is obtained through the means of faith and works. This corresponds to their denial of the immediate imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity. Roman Catholics only allow for a mediate imputation of Adam's guilt through our own actions.

since our heavenly trainer is a merciful God, we will long to be merciful like He is (verse 7).

B. Unbelievers Do Not Have True Mercy (Rom. 1:31; James 3:17; Prov. 14:22)

In your outlines I have given some other proofs that this cannot teach that our mercy earns God's justification. I won't go through all of the Scriptures, but James 3:17 describes genuine mercy as one of the fruits of the Spirit - as a gift that comes from above. Unless a person is given the gift of the Holy Spirit; in other words, unless he is already saved, he cannot even begin to have this grace of being merciful. And once you see Christ's exposition you will see that the supernatural kind of mercy that He is talking about is impossible for anyone apart from grace.

C. The Righteousness Of Unbelievers Can Never Make Them Acceptable To God (Matt. 5:20,47-48; 6:1,2; Is. 64:6; Rom. 3:20,28; 4:1-5; 10:1-5)

Point number C basically gives verses showing that the only works that are acceptable to God come after we are saved and give evidence that we are saved, but works done before salvation are never acceptable to God. Isaiah 64:6 tells us that all our righteousness are as filthy rags prior to coming to Christ. They are unfit for God.

D. Grace Must Always Precede Mercy; The Sin Must First Be Dealt With Before The Punishment Can Be Removed (Gen. 19:19; Ex. 33:19; 2 Chron. 30:9; Neh. 9:17,31; Ps. 77:9; 86:15; 116:5; 145:8; Is. 30:18; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Heb. 4:16; 2 John 1:3)

And that by the way is why Scripture speaks of grace and mercy (in that order), not mercy and grace. Grace must deal with the problem of sin before mercy can deal with the consequences of sin. Grace must deal with our guilt before mercy can deal with our misery. So hopefully you can see that Jesus is promising mercy to true believers if these true believers will seek to live out the grace by which they are already saved.

II. Believers Have Misery When They Are Unmerciful (Matt. 5:23-24; 6:15; 18:21-35; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:35-37; John 20:23; 1 Cor. 11:29-32; James 5:13-18)

But that is precisely what confuses many people. So, under Roman numeral II, let's look at some examples of true believers who find misery

rather than happiness, and they find this misery precisely because they don't show mercy to other people. Look first at Matthew 6:14-15. **“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”** The Lord's Prayer is a prayer of believers and verse 11 says, **“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”** He is saying, “Why should God be easy on you with discipline if you refuse to have mercy upon your brothers or sisters?” That's what was going on in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul told them that their mean spirit toward each other was bringing discipline. **“For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”** He is saying that when there is lack of mercy in our hearts to each other, God has no mercy when it comes to discipline. He says, “Some of you have gotten sick, and some of you have even died because of your lack of love for each other in this area.

Turn to Matthew 18. This is related to discipline, but it shows how Satan can take advantage of us when we lack mercy. Let's begin reading at verse 21.

Matthew 18:21 Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

Forgiveness is one way of showing mercy, and Peter wants to know, “How much mercy do I really have to show? How radical does my mercy have to be?” Well, Jesus answers in verses 22 and following:

Matthew 18:22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

Matthew 18:23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

Matthew 18:24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

Matthew 18:25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

Matthew 18:26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, “Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’

Matthew 18:27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

Matthew 18:28 ¶ “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’

Matthew 18:29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’

Matthew 18:30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

Matthew 18:31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

Matthew 18:32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, “You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

Matthew 18:33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?” [And by the way, the words “compassion” and “pity” are the same Greek word as our word “mercy.” So there was lack of mercy being shown.]

Matthew 18:34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

Matthew 18:35 ¶ “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

Roman Catholics try to teach that this means you will burn in purgatory for your sins for thousands of years until you have paid for them. But this has nothing to do with the afterlife. This has to do with your misery in life right now. And yes, Christians can be miserable. I think we all know miserable Christians who have lost the joy of the Lord because their failure on this beatitude has short-circuited that joy.

Let’s clarify a couple things in this passage. First, Jesus was talking to His disciples, and answering *Peter’s* question of how often *he* should forgive his *brothers and sisters in Christ*. So we are talking about believers here. In verse 33 he speaks of him as a fellow servant who has received God’s mercy. And verse 35 repeats the idea that he is talking to spiritual family members – “**So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.**” So it’s talking about torment that believers can go through in life.

The second interesting thing about this passage is the term used for torturers or tormenters in verse 34. This is a word that is used elsewhere to describe demons (Matt 4:24; 8:6; Rev. 9:5; 11:10). He’s using a play on words here. The master in the parable hands the person over to the torturers, and Jesus says that your Father will do exactly the same thing to you if you don’t show mercy. The Father will hand you over to the torturers. What’s He saying? I believe He is saying that God will allow Satan access to your life to afflict you and put you in bondage. He will hand you over to demons when you lack mercy.

And people might object, “Oh! That can’t be! 1John 5:18 says that Satan can’t even touch someone who is born again.” And my response is, “No, it doesn’t say that. There is a qualifier – the one born of God *keeps* himself (or as the margin says more literally, “guards” himself). It is only as he guards himself that the evil one cannot touch him. And this beatitude

shows one of the ways that we guard ourselves – so that God’s mercies continue, including the mercy of keeping Satan at bay. But if you are handed over to Satan you won’t have any power over Satan until you deal with this issue. I’ve had people in my office renounce their sins, the legal ground they have given to Satan, and the demons themselves, and have found almost instant relief from miseries that have plagued them over the years. Jesus is very literally saying that when you refuse to live by this beatitude, in addition to other miseries, you will have torturers or demons messing around with you. And there are many Scriptures that talk about this. If you are not aware of this, you need to read the gift the session gave you in January – *The Christian in Complete Armor*, by William Gurnall.

Eph. 4:26-27 speaks of giving “place” to the devil through unresolved anger. You might not think that unresolved anger is a very big deal, but it is. Unresolved anger against a brother can automatically give Satan a foothold in your life. Demons are constantly looking for ways that they can take advantage of you. They are tormentors who love to torment. Are there other dangers from demons? Yes there are. Even though a Christian cannot be possessed, his tongue (for instance) can be “**set on fire by hell**” (James 3:6), which means that Satan can use a believer’s tongue. In Matthew 16 Satan used Peter’s tongue to tempt Jesus. And Scripture indicates that we can bring our other parts of our body into slavery to Satan.

In fact, 1&2Corinthians indicate that the some of the believers had given ground to demons because they were ignorant of his devices. This is why some were weak, some were sick, and some had died. And you start tracing this idea through the Scripture and you find that believers automatically give demons legal ground to torment them emotionally, physically, and socially when they lack a merciful attitude. Bitterness is almost like a handlebar that you are giving Satan to hold you and manipulate you. Luke 13:16 speaks of a true believing woman who had been physically bound by Satan with some kind of an ailment for eighteen years. Satan can torment even believers. And it takes confession of this sin and renunciation to get free from such bondage. James 5:16 says, “**Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.**” You may not have thought about it, but much of the misery you experience in life, whether it is spiritual or physical or financial, may be due to the fact that you have ignored this beatitude. Christ makes it very clear that God’s mercy is conditioned upon our willingness to be merciful - not in terms of salvation, but in terms of our relationships with each other. He brings loving discipline until we come to the place where we are willing to pursue the

lifestyle of the beatitudes: **“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”**

If you have had someone that has asked your forgiveness and wants reconciliation, and yet you have hardened your heart against him or her, then make sure that you get that taken care of immediately. Matthew 5 says that when that happens, reconciliation is more important than worship. That’s how serious He took it. He said, **“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”** God will not receive the worship of those who are unmerciful, even if they are saved.

1 Peter 3:7 tells us that when husbands do not have an attitude of mercy to their wives, their prayers are hindered. God won’t hear you. You might be praying for financial mercies, traveling mercies, or other mercies, and your prayers won’t get past the ceiling. Study that passage. He is telling husbands that if they want God to hear their prayers for mercy, they need to go out of their way to be merciful to their wives. Happiness is conditioned upon being merciful. If you want mercy from God’s spanking stick, then you need to show mercy. And if I had time, I could show many other miseries that flow from lack of being merciful.

III. What It Means To Be Merciful (Christ’s exposition of this beatitude in 5:38-6:4)

A. Not Taking Justice Into Your Own Hands (Matt. 5:38-42)

But let’s take a quick look at *Christ’s* exposition of this beatitude to see what kinds of mercy we are supposed to show. And let’s start at verse 38. And by the way, Jesus is not contradicting the Old Testament anywhere in the Sermon on the Mount. He is contradicting the Pharisee’s false interpretations of the Old Testament. Any time the New Testament quotes the Old, it will say, “It is written.” But here He is quoting the oral traditions of the rabbi’s, which were recorded for us in the Talmud. Let’s begin reading at verse 38:

Matthew 5:38 **“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’**

Nowhere in the Old Testament is that verse applied to the individual. It is applied to the state. That was supposed to be civil law – the Lex Talionis. The state was required to render God’s justice, which was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But the Pharisees didn’t want to mess with using the civil magistrate. That takes too long. They said that if you hit them,

they would hit you twice as hard. If you took something from them, they would take twice as much from you. They misused this civil law to instruct people on how to get even. And Jesus is saying, “That’s not a law for the individual.”

Romans 12-13 gives the same balance. Romans 12 tells us not to take vengeance because vengeance belongs to God. But in Romans 13 God tells the state that they are God’s instrument of vengeance, and they must take vengeance. When you get Romans 12 and 13 mixed up you get all kinds of problems. When you have individuals following Romans 13 you get terrorism. When the state tries to love citizens, you get the messed up situation we are in today with Health Care, welfare, and other nonsensical laws. No – Lex Talionis is for the state, and mercy is for the individual. Romans 13 is for the state; Romans 12 is for the individual. Going on...

Matthew 5:39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person.

Don’t yank this out of context. He is not advocating passivism. He is talking about resisting with the Lex Talionis. We are not allowed to resist anyone by taking justice into our own hands. He’s not saying you can’t resist Satanic attacks. We are commanded to. He’s not saying that we can’t resist ungodly civil laws. We are called to do that just like John the Baptist did. In fact, Jesus did, and Paul did. He is not saying that you can’t defend your family or yourself from a murderer or a rapist. We are commanded to do so. He is only saying, “Don’t resist evil with the Lex Talionis. That law was only intended for the civil magistrate. So if you know a neighbor has stolen something and you can’t prove it, you might be tempted to take the law into your own hands and pillage his house and be a kind of Robin Hood. If your neighbor has murdered someone, and the courts acquitted him because of lack of evidence, you might be tempted to take the law into your own hands and get a lynch mob together. Jesus says that you may not do that. The Pharisees were into lynch mobs, but Jesus was saying that was unbiblical. Caiaphas the high priest was notorious for hiring mobs to lynch people when he couldn’t get his way in the courts. He ended up being cornered in an alley one time and stoned to death because of how frustrated the populace was with him. That kind of resistance to evil must be left to the civil magistrate. And if you can’t get justice from the courts, you can’t get bitter over it. That is a sure way to misery. Jesus says that when you can’t get justice, pursue mercy with all your heart so that you can find blessedness from Him. Jesus gets even more radical. He says,

But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

Again, this has nothing whatsoever to do with protecting yourself from attack. You are allowed to protect yourself if you are being attacked.

To be slapped on the right cheek was a technical term for an insult. The only way a right-handed person could slap you on the right cheek was with a backhanded slap, like this... Remember in France how they would challenge you to a duel by slapping you with a glove. That's exactly what this is talking about. And dueling in America was in part eventually outlawed by appeal to this passage. If a person had been slandered, he was not to take justice into his own hands. Biblically he was required to go through the courts, and if he couldn't get justice there, he was to pursue mercy. And it was for his own good as much as it was for the other person's good. The way Romans 12 words it is, **“Repay no one evil for evil... Beloved to not avenge yourselves, but give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”** But in the next chapter Paul goes on to show how you can certainly seek justice through the courts and through the sword of the civil government. If you can't get justice there, then show forbearance and mercy. Jesus goes on...

Matthew 5:40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also.

Jesus is not saying you can't fight a wrongful suit. Paul did so, and Romans 13 explicitly says that you can use the courts to fight injustice. So if this is a legitimate suit, how does it relate to mercy and the Lex Talionis? I think Jesus is saying not to use technicalities in the law to avoid paying someone something you owe them. There are two rabbinic practices that may provide background to what Jesus is opposing. The first oral tradition that had been upheld in the courts was to say that it was OK to rip off Gentiles. I have a couple quotes from the Talmud in my footnotes that basically says, “Finders keepers, losers weepers.”² I also have a quote that says you don't need to pay a Gentile if your ox gores him.³ You have to pay Jews, but you don't have to pay Gentiles. These were technical ways of circumventing the law and avoiding having to pay damages.

² “R. Bibi b. Giddal said that R. Simeon the Pious stated: The robbery of a heathen is prohibited, though an article lost by him is permissible... His lost article is permissible, for R. Hama b. Guria said that Rab stated: Whence can we learn that the lost article of heathen is permissible? Because it says: *And with all lost thing of thy brother's*: it is to your brother that you make restoration, but you need not make restoration to a heathen.” (Baba Kamma 113a)

“If one finds therein [in a city inhabited by Jews and heathens] a lost object, then if the majority are Israelites it has to be announced, but if the majority are heathens it has not to be announced.” (Baba Kamma 113b)

³ “WHERE AN OX BELONGING TO AN ISRAELITE HAS GORED AN OX BELONGING TO A CANAANITE, THERE IS NO LIABILITY. WHEREAS WHERE AN OX BELONGING TO A CANAANITE GORES AN OX BELONGING TO AN ISRAELITE ... THE COMPENSATION IS TO BE MADE IN FULL.” (Baba Mezia 24a)

The second possibility was a technicality in the law that an outer garment could not be taken. In the Old Testament, this provision was used to protect an abjectly poor person who had to use that garment to stay warm at night. The law was intended to limit the government, not the individual who owed the money. Jesus is saying that even though your adversary legally can't get your cloak, if you owe something, give it to him. Go overboard to make sure you are in the clear. Continuing in verse 41:

Matthew 5:41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.

This is not talking about a robber holding you up with a gun; nor is it talking about someone off the street asking you for help; this is not helping a little old lady with her groceries. The word for "compels" means "to press into service" or "to conscript" and is a word that is only used of government officials. This was another irritating law, this time a Roman law, which allowed soldiers to impress anyone into carrying a load for them for one mile. And Jesus is not saying that you can't hide from impress gangs. But let's say that you got caught by the Dragoons and got conscripted into carrying something for one mile. To make it clear that you weren't being forced to do this, and to make sure that you weren't getting bitter, tell the soldier that you would be happy to carry the load for a second mile. This is where the expression, "Go the extra mile" comes from. I've got a booklet that applies this concept to business and shows how God blesses those who go the extra mile even when those you are serving don't deserve it. Do more than what you are required to do, and it will come back to bless you. Verse 42:

Matthew 5:42 Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

Keep in mind that Christ is still countering the misuse of the Lex Talionis in verse 38. He is telling you to show mercy even to people that you would love to kick into the ditch. Like Romans 12 says, "**Repay no one evil for evil...Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him to drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**" And by the way, Paul is quoting the Old Testament when he says that.

And lest you think that this is inapplicable to the present, let me tell you a story. My former pastor had a neighbor who was a bitter old lady. When they first moved into their house, which was next to hers, they sent over a cake (I think it was a cake, or some other kind of treat), she poured out her contempt on them, and said that they were only doing this to get something out of her. It crushed the kids. They felt terrible. But the parents

wisely told them that they shouldn't let her evil attitudes get the best of them, and that they would continue to reach out to her. When the woman in other ways treated them poorly they finally had a family council and declared a war of love on this lady. They began going out of their way to do nice things and to offer to be of assistance. They would mow her lawn. She would pour out contempt. They would bake a cake. She would pour out contempt. They would send her nice cards. I forget how long it took, but the eagerness to give when others would have returned an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth finally broke her down and she became a transformed Christian.

You can see that Jesus is being radical when he advocates mercy. He is asking us to be merciful when everyone else would be taking vengeance. And when you start overcoming evil with good by giving mercy, God will pour out more and more mercy into your own life.

B. Loving The Unlovable (Matt. 5:43-48)

The second way Christ shows us how to extend mercy is by loving the unlovable. Let's start reading at verse 43:

Matthew 5:43 ¶ ***“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’***

You won't find that anywhere in the Old Testament, but you will find it in the Talmud. Instead, the Old Testament repeatedly called Israel to love their enemies. For example, Proverbs 25 says, **“If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the LORD will reward you.”** (vv. 21-22) That sounds familiar doesn't it? Paul and Christ were giving the true interpretation of the Old Testament. Anyway, Jesus goes on to say:

Matthew 5:44 **But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,**

Matthew 5:45 **that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.**

Matthew 5:46 **For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?**

Matthew 5:47 **And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?**

Matthew 5:48 **Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.**

C. Going So Far Beyond Your Comfort Zone That You Are Imitating God's Mercy (Matt. 5:45-48)

Many stories could be given to illustrate God's power shown through mercy, but let me read one from Corrie Ten Boom. She recounts the story of meeting one of the cruelest and most heartless of her German guards years after she was released. He was one who had repeatedly humiliated and degraded both her and her sister. Then one day, years later, he came up after one of her meetings and told her that he was now a Christian, and that God had forgiven him, but that he wanted to ask her forgiveness for what he had done. He stood before her with his hand stretched out and asked her, "Will you forgive me?" Here's what she writes.

I stood there with coldness clutching at my heart, but I know that the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. I prayed, Jesus, help me! Woodenly, mechanically I thrust my hand into one stretched out to me and I experienced an incredible thing. The current started in my shoulder, raced down into my arms and sprang into our clutched hands. Then this warm reconciliation seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. 'I forgive you, brother,' I cried with my whole heart. For a long moment we grasped each other's hands, the former guard, the former prisoner. I have never known the love of God so intensely as I did at that moment! To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you."

Happy are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. She obtained mercy inwardly by being merciful. Jesus is calling us to such radical mercy that we ourselves are transformed. These kinds of acts of mercy take us way beyond the natural realm and force us to start living in the realm of the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, that's the whole purpose of the Sermon on the Mount – to get us to quit trying in our own strength, and to begin to lay claim to the resources of heaven. He wants us to be able to say with Paul, "**it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me**" (Gal. 2:20). What he is saying is that the true blessings of Christianity begin to flow when we quit trying to be a Christian and we begin moment by moment depend upon Jesus living through me.

D. Mercy Ministries (Matt. 5:45 - 6:4)

Christ's last section continues this theme of radical mercy ministries. It begins in chapter 6.

Matthew 6:1 “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Matthew 6:2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Matthew 6:3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

Matthew 6:4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Jesus speaks of reward four times in his exposition mercy. We will look at the multiplied blessings that we have in a moment, but this paragraph takes the mercy ministries from simply being outward acts to a truly inward disposition. When you can do mercy ministries and find joy in them because you are doing them for the Father, rather than finding joy in them because others notice, then you have truly embraced the grace of the Holy Spirit for this beatitude. That’s the test of authentic mercy ministry – can we do it even when no one notices?

This may seem so beyond our ability to accomplish that it isn’t even worth pursuing. But the reality is that anyone who has experienced the poverty of beatitude #1 has the faith to receive this kind of mercy every day from heaven. And when we blow it, we move on to beatitude 2 and repent and get up and receive from heaven again. And when it doesn’t seem worthwhile, we ask God for the meekness to be able to be trained for the spiritual Olympics of mercy. That’s the meekness of verse 5. And when we question whether the privilege of being coached by King Jesus is worth it, we ask God to give us the hunger and thirst for righteousness of verse 6. But this isn’t about trying harder. This is about a willingness to hold out our hand like Corrie ten Boom did and watch God come through by giving supernatural mercy. Put yourself in the place where God loves to pour His graces out. Step out of the boat like Peter, and begin to watch yourself walk on the proverbial water. You will find yourself ushered into the true joy and happiness of experiencing the supernatural.

IV. Believers Have Multiplied Blessings When They Are Merciful

A. *“Mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13; cf. Matt. 5:38-6:4; Rom. 12:17-21)*

Let me end by quickly pointing out the incredible blessings that God pours out into the lives of the merciful. The first blessing is that those who deserve retribution can't control your heart. And that is an incredible blessing. James 2:13 says, **“Mercy triumphs over judgment.”** Jesus is not telling us that we ought to be wimps and roll over and to die, but that we should *conquer* through mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. Paul said the same thing in Romans 12. After listing many deeds of mercy in verses 13-21, he says **“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”** When you come to a place where evil people no longer control your heart and no longer make you miserable, you are blessed indeed. You have conquered hate with mercy. You have triumphed over judgment.

B. *Inward happiness (Prov. 11:17; 14:21)*

And that leads me to the second blessing, which is definitely related. Not only does it conquer outwardly, but it also conquers our unruly hearts and brings joy. Proverbs 11:17 says, **“The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh.”** The merciful man does good for his own soul. It has a positive affect upon us. It causes us to grow in the things of God. It brings inward happiness, whereas the attitudes of trying to get even make us more and more miserable. Proverbs 14:21 says, **“He who despises his neighbor sins; but he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.”** So in this verse mercy is shown to be the opposite of despising someone in your heart. And God says, happy is the one who is merciful to the poor. Mercy has an affect upon us inwardly. It takes away the poison of bitterness, anger, and other negative emotions, and it fills us with peace, comfort, and joy.

C. *“God’s mercies are new every morning” (Lam. 3:22-23; cf. 2 Sam. 12:9-14; Ps. 18:25-26; 23:6; Prov. 19:17; Matt. 5:23-24; 6:15; John 20:23; 1 Cor. 11:29-32; James 2:12-13; 5:13-18)*

Thirdly, I have given 11 passages that show the mercies we receive from the Lord when we are merciful to others. Psalm 18:25 says, **“With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful.”** So God spares us from what we deserve. What you deserve might be a simple speeding ticket. God spares you from it. What you deserve might be exposure in the newspaper. God

sparing you from it. “With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful.” Lamentations 3 says, “**Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.**” James 5 speaks of healing in our lives. That’s a mercy that we don’t deserve, but God loves to give healing. 1 Corinthians 11 implies the same. And if you take the opposite of the misery passages we looked at, you can see that God pours out many blessings in our lives when we embrace mercy.

D. Satan Cannot Take Advantage (2 Cor. 2:11)

And then finally, we find regained power over Satan. The ancient Christian writer, Chrysostom said, “mercy imitates God and disappoints Satan.” Why does it disappoint Satan? Because he loses his hold over us when we embrace radical mercy. He no longer has those handlebars to grab us and control us. That is substantially what Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 2:11. He told them to forgive the brother who had repented. But that brother had been involved in such gross sin (it was incest), that the church didn’t welcome him back in. He begged for the church to forgive him, and they refused. He was a black sheep and they didn’t want anything to do with him. They were embarrassed by his bad testimony. But Paul rebuked them and told them that the purpose of discipline was restoration, and that they needed to have mercy. And here’s the reason that he gave - “**lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.**” Satan would love to take advantage of us. Satan took advantage of them when they refused to discipline, and then he took advantage of them when they were too harsh in their discipline. And Satan knows that if he can get you to be upset over backbiting, slander, and personal hurts from a friend, or if he can get you to join someone else’s offense, he will gain power over you. Christ calls us to the happiness of being merciful so that we might obtain mercy. May it be so Lord Jesus. Amen.

Conclusion

My charge to you comes from Colossians 3:12. “**Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.**”

Blessed are the Merciful
Matthew 5:7 with 5:38-64
 By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 4-11-2010

Introduction

I. This Beatitude Does Not Teach Salvation By Works

- A. The order of the beatitudes argues against salvation by works
- B. Unbelievers Do Not Have True Mercy (Rom. 1:31; James 3:17; Prov. 14:22)
- C. The Righteousness Of Unbelievers Can Never Make Them Acceptable To God (Matt. 5:20,47-48; 6:1,2; Is. 64:6; Rom. 3:20,28; 4:1-5; 10:1-5)
- D. Grace Must Always Precede Mercy; The Sin Must First Be Dealt With Before The Punishment Can Be Removed (Gen. 19:19; Ex. 33:19; 2 Chron. 30:9; Neh. 9:17,31; Ps. 77:9; 86:15; 116:5; 145:8; Is. 30:18; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Heb. 4:16; 2 John 1:3)

II. Believers Have Misery When They Are Unmerciful (Matt. 5:23-24; 6:15; 18:21-35; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:35-37; John 20:23; 1 Cor. 11:29-32; James 5:13-18)

III. What It Means To Be Merciful

- A. Not Taking Justice Into Your Own Hands (Matt. 5:38-42)
- B. Loving The Unlovable (Matt. 5:43-48)
- C. Going So Far Beyond Your Comfort Zone That You Are Imitating God's Mercy (Matt. 5:45-48)
- D. Mercy Ministries (Matt. 5:45 - 6:4)

IV. Believers Have Multiplied Blessings When They Are Merciful

- A. "Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13; cf. Matt. 5:38-6:4; Rom. 12:17-21)
- B. Inward happiness (Prov. 11:17; 14:21)
- C. "God's mercies are new every morning" (Lam. 3:22-23; cf. 2 Sam. 12:9-14; Ps. 18:25-26; 23:6; Prov. 19:17; Matt. 5:23-24; 6:15; John 20:23; 1 Cor. 11:29-32; James 2:12-13; 5:13-18)
- D. Satan Cannot Take Advantage (2 Cor. 2:11)

Conclusion

