

“Blessed Are the Merciful”

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction: Matthew 5:7

- A. Grace and mercy: grace is when we receive more blessings than we have earned; mercy is when we do not receive the punishment we deserve.
 - 1. Only God is all-seeing and all-wise to dispense grace and mercy to humankind - Heb. 4:16
 - 2. We are not God and cannot know enough about others to determine who should receive grace and mercy
 - 3. Gandalf’s advice to Frodo who said Gollum deserved death for his evil. The success of the entire quest depended on him heeding this advice. “Deserves it! I daresay he does. Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then do not be too eager to deal out death in judgment. For even the very wise cannot see all ends.” (J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*)
 - 4. Our part is to be merciful, not to make judgments about who deserves mercy. Do you deserve mercy; have you earned grace? Then do not be quick to decide that others should not receive mercy from you.
 - 5. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” - Matt. 5:7
 - 6. The inverse is implicitly true: “Cursed are the unmerciful, for they shall not obtain mercy.”
 - 7. James 2:13; Psalms 116:1-2
- B. We are changed by our exercise of mercy.
 - 1. “The willingness to forgive is a sign of spiritual and emotional maturity. It is one of the great virtues to which we all should aspire. Imagine a world filled with individuals willing both to apologize and to accept an apology. Is there any problem that could not be solved among people who possessed the humility and largeness of spirit and mercy to do both when needed?” (Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something: 10 Neglected Virtues That Will Heal Our Hearts and Homes*)
 - 2. “I have always found that mercy bears richer fruits than strict justice.” (Abraham Lincoln)
 - 3. “What a pity that Bilbo did not stab that vile creature, when he had a chance!” (Frodo) “Pity? It was Pity that stayed his hand. Pity, and Mercy: not to strike without need. And he has been well rewarded, Frodo. Be sure that he took so little hurt from the evil, and escaped in the end, because he began his ownership of the Ring so. With Pity.” (Gandalf) (J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*)
- C. We are made mature in the faith by our exercise of mercy
 - 1. The Beatitudes teach us about how faith grows
 - 2. To begin to grow, we must accept becoming: poor in spirit, able to mourn, and meek at heart
 - 3. To accelerate growth, we must hunger and thirst after righteousness, pursue peace and purity, and endure persecution

4. To arrive at maturity, we must extend mercy to others. It is at that point, the person of faith reflects the image of God in his own life
 5. A mature faith does not merely provide for the spiritual health of the one who is faithful, but it radiates outward to inspire faith in others
- D. Mercy is the necessary balance to righteousness
1. God is righteous, but if He were only righteousness, He would be hard, demanding, and impossible for man to approach
 - a. People who are nothing but “righteous” are hard, cold, and so judgmental that there is no room for anything except perfection
 2. Mercy tempers righteousness with compassion and understanding
 - a. But righteousness is based in truth, and mercy never contradicts the truth; it relieves the demands of justice
 - b. Mercy is the “thou shalt not,” tempered by the voice of Calvary saying “Father, forgive them.”

I. MERCY IN THE SCRIPTURES

- A. Mercy is part of the nature of God - Deut. 7:9; 1Chron. 16:34 (repeated 4 times in the Psalms); Joel 2:13
- B. Mercy enables God to be sensitive to man’s distress - Psalm 4:1, 6:2, 9:13
- C. Mercy defers punishment for our sins - Psalm 25:7, 41:4, 51:1; Luke 18:13; Titus 3:4-6
- D. Mercy is the answer to man’s hopelessness - Psalm 56:1, 86:3; Heb. 4:16
- E. Examples - Gen. 19:16, 39:21; Matt. 9:27, 15:22, 17:15; Luke 10:36-37

II. GOD WANTS US TO PRACTICE MERCY

- A. Mercy has an effect the following:
 1. The level of compassion and pity you feel for others
 2. Your ability to respond to the needs and cries for help of others
 3. The harshness with which you judge the apparent motives and actions of others
 4. Your ability to show kindness and gentleness to others
 5. Your reduced desire for punishment or revenge on the sins of others against you
 6. Your ability to stand for the truth and promote righteousness without discouraging or destroying people in the process
 7. Mercy demands a level of faith that not everyone is willing to develop or able to practice
- B. Has God been merciful to you?
 1. Do you realize the great sacrifice given for you?
 2. Do you realize the awful wrath of God that you have avoided because of His mercy?
 3. Can you see that without mercy, there would be no way for you to stand before God?
- B. How can someone who loves the mercy given him be unwilling to extend mercy to others?
 1. Matt. 18:21-34