

Searching the Scriptures / 52 / Blessed Are The Merciful / Part 2

One of the so-called “Beatitudes” given by Jesus Christ in Mat 5:7 says, “*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*” Let’s look at what we can learn about “*the merciful*” and “*mercy*” by considering these points:

1. Mercy is Patterned After God Himself
2. Who are the Merciful?
3. Mercy is to be Shared

Mercy is Patterned After God Himself

“*Merciful*” means “full of mercy” or “compassionate”. It is an attribute of God, as we read in these three Psalms:

Psa 103:8 “*The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.*”

Psa 116:5 “*Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.*”

Psa 145:8 “*The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.*”

An English dictionary says that being “*merciful*” is a willingness to grant “a reprieve from a fate of considerable severity without further implication.” In short, we can say that “*mercy* is not receiving the punishment deserved.” Thus, the greatest act of mercy is that of God’s forgiving a person’s sins through the atoning work of Jesus Christ at the cross and, thereby, granting them a reprieve from a fate of ultimate severity – eternal damnation in Hell.

Obviously, no man has the authority to forgive anyone’s sins so that they will no longer be subject to God’s eternal wrath. So how can we, as mere men, obey God’s command to be “*merciful*” in the same manner as He is “*merciful*”, according to Luke 6:36: “*Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful*”? Let’s explore this question further during the remainder of our lesson today.

Who are the Merciful?

Exactly who are “*the merciful*” in Mat 5:7? A casual reading of that Beatitude might lead us to conclude that we must somehow first be “*merciful*” in order to “*obtain mercy*”, but we know from many other verses in the Bible that there is nothing we can do to obtain God’s mercy – it is an undeserved gift. Since the Beatitudes describe various characteristics of those who are “*blessed*”, or saved, we can know immediately that we must first “*obtain mercy*”, or salvation, from God before we can, in turn, be “*merciful*” to others.

That verse is similar to Acts 16:31, which says: “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved....*” A person who is one of those who “*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*” definitely “*shalt be saved*” when God completes his salvation by giving him a glorified, spiritual and eternal body at the resurrection of the Last Day. We need to understand that salvation is a process that started before Creation. Thus, if we are one of “*the merciful*”, we are one of God’s people and shall continue to “*obtain mercy*” from God forever. We find the opposite is true of unbelievers – those with “*reprobate minds*” – whom God calls “*unmerciful*” in Rom 1:31.

Perhaps we can look at the context by starting with verses 28 through 31: *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.”*

Mercy is to be Shared

So how can we possibly obey God’s command in Luke 6:36 to be *“merciful”*? That verse is similar to what we read in Mat 5:48 *“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”* When we become saved, we also become *“perfect”* in God’s eyes because we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

Likewise, it is God who enables those who first obtain His mercy through salvation to reflect His merciful nature towards others. 1 Pet 2:10 explains who those people are, *“[Believers] Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”* In other words, those who *“obtain mercy”* (salvation) are called *“the people of God”* (believers), and God gives His people the ability to *“love mercy”* according to Mic 6:8 *“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”*

Although believers do not have the authority to forgive sins, they do have a duty to share God’s mercy with others by proclaiming the True Gospel of grace so that God may forgive their sins, if it is His will to do so. The Gospel is the *“power of God unto salvation”* according to Rom 1:16. We read in Pro 14:21, *“He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.”* Our *“neighbour”* is our fellow man, and those who are spiritually *“poor”* are unsaved. We believers have mercy on our unsaved neighbors by giving them the Gospel.

Have you obtained God’s mercy so you can obey God’s commandment to *“be merciful”* that we read earlier in Luke 6:36? *“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”*