

Blessed Are The Merciful

By David Phillips

In the fifth beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*” (Matthew 5:7). Concerning this mercy every Christian ought to understand and constantly ponder: we were once dead in our sins, we were without God in the world, destitute, and defiled but God had mercy on us. If you are not yet a Christian than know that this same mercy is available for all who come to God. But if we want to obtain God’s mercy, we must also show mercy. Just as God showed compassion toward us, so we must do for our fellow man.

Mercy Is Forgiving

It is because of the mercy of God that we can be forgiven of our sins; therefore we must also forgive others. Concerning this principle Jesus’ disciples questioned Him saying, “*How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?*” (Matthew 18:21). Jesus answered with this parable. “*I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 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. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 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!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 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. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him*” (Matthew 18:22-34).

Jesus summarized this principle in Matthew 6:14. Therefore, forgive those who sin against you, for their debt is nothing compared to yours, and your heavenly Father forgives you. Remember Christ’s mercy and walk in His steps.

Mercy Loves Its Enemies

It is because of the mercy of God that Christ died for His enemies, as it is written, “*And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight*” (Colossians 2:21-22). And again, “*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8). Therefore we must also love our enemies, just as Jesus also commands us. “*...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, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven... Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 7:44-48). When your enemies revile you, do you bless them in return? When your neighbors gossip about you, do you pray for them? When someone takes something from you do you give to them beyond what they desired of you? The world in its selfishness would avoid such actions, but we are of God. Therefore we are commanded in Matthew 5:16, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”* This is the mercy that Christ has toward us; let us walk in His footsteps.

Mercy Is Compassionate to Physical Needs

It is because of the mercy of God that we are richly blessed in this world. Whatever need we have He cares for. God showed mercy toward His servant, Elijah, when He sent the ravens to feed him in the wilderness in 1 Kings 17:2-7. He had mercy upon Israel when He brought forth water from the rock (Exodus 17), and sent the manna and the quail for sustenance in the wilderness (Exodus 16:9ff; Numbers 11:31ff). Even so He shows mercy on each one of us every time we eat a morsel of food to fill our hunger, take a drink of water to quench our thirst, or put on a coat to protect us from the elements. By this the scripture is continually fulfilled which states, *“Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine”* (Psalm 33:18-19). In this manner we too are to be merciful to our neighbors and brethren. Therefore it is written in 1 John 3:16-18, *“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”*

The Lord shows mercy toward us by taking care of our physical needs; let us walk in His footsteps. When we are merciful in this way then we shall obtain this mercy from our Lord in this life, and in the life to come.

Mercy Is Conditional

Let us also understand that the mercy of God is that of truth and righteousness. His mercy does not condone sin, but teaches men to come out of sin. True, God *“...raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory”* (1 Samuel 2:8). But to those who walk in iniquity and do not walk in the way of the Lord, His mercy will be withheld. Within the volume of scripture it is written, *“The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation”* (Numbers 14:18). Jeremiah writes concerning Israel in Jeremiah 5:24-25 saying, *“They do not say in their heart, ‘Let us now fear the LORD our God, who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest.’ Your iniquities have turned these things away, and your sins have withheld good from you.”* When we turn and repent of our sins God is faithful to forgive us, but so long as we continue in them He will not! His mercy is upon sinners now because He waits; in His patience He withholds His wrath for a time that they may have another opportunity to turn and repent (2 Pet. 3:9). But when His patience has run out and His wrath is unleashed in the day of the Lord in fiery judgment

those who do not obey the gospel will be lost for eternity; they will not receive one ounce of His mercy.

Righteous mercy does not forgive those who do not repent. It does not allow those in error to remain in error. *“He shall send from heaven and save me; He reproaches the one who would swallow me up. God shall send forth His mercy and His truth”* (Psalm 57:3). Let us therefore understand that we must be merciful as God is merciful. But His mercy does not teach that we should turn our eyes when a brother is in sin. For there are many deceivers in the world teaching that we must show mercy to those in adultery by allowing them to live in their sin without question. They teach that we should give to those who will not work and heal those who will not give up their destructive ways. Brethren, this is not the mercy of God, but the deception of Satan.

Jesus shows how to have mercy on those living in sin in Matthew 18:15-17; by confronting their sin and taking the necessary steps to convict them and bring them to repentance. Paul also instructs us concerning this matter in 1 Cor. 5:4-5 saying, *“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”* Our mercy toward those living in sin is seen in our efforts to bring them back to the Lord, not in ignoring their inevitable destruction. Therefore Jude instructed us in verses 22 and 23 of his letter, *“And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh”* (Jude 22-23).

Jesus showed us how to be merciful to the physical needs of our neighbors. But we are also told, *“For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread”* (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). The mercy of God is the result of love, righteousness and godliness and it accompanies those who are of God. Therefore it does not indulge sinfulness or laziness, rather it teaches men to leave those things and come to God, Just as Jesus said, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16).

Conclusion

Do you desire the mercy of God? Then consider the example of the publican in Luke 18:13-14. *“And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”* All of us must because like this publican if we are to receive forgiveness. We must humble ourselves before Him and submit to His will. We must be merciful toward the sins of others, toward our enemies and toward those in need. Let our mercy reflect that of our Father in Heaven, then we will, in turn, obtain His mercy. When we repent of our sins Jesus then says, *“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved...”* (Mark 16:16). Will you come?