

*Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.*

### **Mercy - what is it?**

√ Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines it as “kind or forgiving treatment of someone in a bad or desperate situation who could be treated harshly.”

√ Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology defines it as “the compassion and love of God, not just expressed in feelings or emotions, but in tangible ways.”

√ When understanding supernatural mercy, it is helpful to compare mercy with grace. Grace is the unmerited, divine assistance that humans receive in coming to God. That is, grace is receiving from God what we don't deserve, but what He chooses to give to enable us to come to Him by faith. However mercy is better described as what God withholds from what is deserved. Or, it is not receiving from God what we deserve. It is the coupling of compassion, forgiveness and assistance. Mercy then is the withholding of an attitude of resentment, judgment or retribution. But it is also the giving of love and practical help.

### **How does this translate into showing mercy as citizens of God's kingdom?**

1. MERCY is a direct result of the first 4 Beatitudes. Specifically, it is a result of (1) my poverty of self apart from God's intervention, (2) my grieving over an ever-present, debilitating sin nature, (3) my emerging from this assessment with a meek and humble persona and (4) finding myself ever longing for the filling of God's righteousness. Therefore, when I see ungodly behavior in others (whether Christian or not), God helps me simultaneously (1) pity their spiritual poverty, (2) understand their propensity to sin, (3) realize their selfish spirit and (4) emptiness of God's rightness at that moment, and supernaturally respond with sincere spiritual pity that wants to forgive and restore. It really is a miraculous process!

2. MERCY overshadows natural feelings of resentment, judgment and retribution. My sin nature may want to react with these unholy attitudes, but the Spirit within overwhelms me with supernatural pity, love, and a wanting to draw the offender out of darkness into light. I cannot be content with “holding a grudge” or “not really caring” with a “whatever” attitude. I hurt for the other's state (for I have been there) and

3. MERCY transforms me from victim to victor. I find myself PRAYING for the offending one, which diffuses my anger or detachment. I find myself REJOICING that this is not who I am in Christ, and I leave behind the need to pass by in an uncaring way, or receive retribution for a wrong done.

4. MERCY causes me to engage rather than disengage. My natural tendency when encountering ungodly behavior is either to let it go in disgust or just not care. After all, “it's not my problem – it's theirs.” But my supernatural tendency is to pity the

offender's state and want to help and restore. It might be engaging in a sincere prayer. It might be engaging in humbly showing some response of love rather than judgment. It might be engaging in asking how I can help. It might be engaging in sincerely offering forgiveness rather than seeking retribution.

### **And what is the blessed result of my showing mercy?**

God's promise is clear – I will receive mercy. So what does that mean? It can't mean that God will finally forgive me. I am already forgiven as a child of God. It can't mean that God will finally care for me – I am already fully cared for as a child of God. Yes, I have already received mercy, but this seems to suggest a “quid pro quo” – in other words, that my showing mercy will result in more mercy

coming to me. That must mean that as I show mercy to others, and am known as one who gives mercy, I will more likely be shown mercy by others when I offend. God will see to that.

1. Yes, I “will receive mercy” in that I have already received it from God
2. Yes, I “will receive mercy” in that I will ultimately be received into heaven by God’s mercy
3. Yes, I “will receive mercy” in the sense that I will more greatly appreciate God’s many mercies to me
4. But just as “whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” so I will reap mercy from others as I sow mercy to others. In this regard, see how Galatians 6:7-10 clearly speaks to this principle.

**Galatians 6:7-10** *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good [showing mercy], for in due time we will reap [mercy] if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good [show mercy] to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*

I believe the most logical and practical interpretation of this blessed result of my showing mercy is that as I give mercy to others, I will be more likely to be given mercy by others when I am in need of it. When it is observed by others that I am a “mercy-giver,” the result will be that I will become a “mercy-receiver” by God’s grace. And how I need and cherish that mercy given me by others. Supernatural mercy given will surely yield supernatural mercy received.

It is not that I show mercy simply to be rewarded by mercy given – no! I give mercy because it is who I am in Christ – it is what God has made me from the inside out. But – when I show that mercy, God blesses me with more mercy coming back to me. Just like you can’t give away love – it always comes back in greater measure, so it is also with mercy.

**Proverbs 11:17** *The merciful man does himself good, but the cruel man does himself harm.*

### **3 Grand Biblical Lessons of Mercy**

Preceding this sermon, I sung for you a song that I wrote as I prepared for this message. In it were three verses, each which referenced a grand lesson of mercy coming straight out of our Bible.

#### **1. The example of Jesus’ first words on the cross (Luke 23:34)**

“Father, forgive them, for they know now what they do” is a great example to us of divine mercy.

He was NOT saying that there was no consequence for sin, or that they would all go to heaven because of forgiveness. Neither was he dismissing their taunts and wanting Him crucified, saying this was of little significance. All sin brings consequence, and heaven only awaits those who have received Christ as the sacrifice for all one’s sin, and there is eternal significance to all acts of rebellion against God.

But Jesus was showing mercy in that He realized that they truly did not realize the depth of their actions. They were blind, lost and dead in their sin. And Jesus was making the proclamation that God can and will forgive any sin covered in faith by the blood of the cross. So sin is beyond God’s forgiveness, if confessed and repented of.

And He was giving us example of how we should respond to those who have wronged us. We must realize that our offenders really don’t know what they do. And we must show them mercy, praying that God might open their eyes to His available forgiveness.

#### **2. The example of the unmerciful slave (Matthew 18:23-35)**

In Matthew 18 we find the story of the king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves. One owed him much, but begged for mercy, not having the means to repay. His Lord had compassion

and released him, forgiving the debt. This, of course, is to remind us of the compassion of our Lord God who has forgiven our many sins.

The story continues with this released slave finding a fellow slave who owed him a small day's wages and demanding its immediate payment. When this underslave begged for mercy the first slave refused and put him in prison until he paid every penny owed. This is to remind us of what we are NOT to do to others.

The story concludes with the Lord discovering what the unmerciful slave has done, and moved with anger, handed him over to torture and imprisonment. Oh how God wants to teach us to be merciful to others, as He has been merciful to us.

### **3. The example of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)**

Jesus told this story in response to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" The story tells of a man beaten and robbed by thieves and left half dead. A priest and then a Levite pass him by, ignoring the need. These are those who should have known better. It was a Samaritan, despised by the Jews for being half-Hebrew and half-Gentile, who saw the need, stopped and met the need with mercy and action, at no small expense to himself. "Who proved to be a neighbor?", asked Jesus. And we are to learn that our mercy must be that of the Good Samaritan – showing compassion for another's plight and doing what we can to mercifully meet the need.

**From these 3 examples, here is what we are to learn about being merciful.**

1. We are to realize our offender doesn't really know the extent of his wrong, and that his sin offends God supremely
2. We are to be willing to forgive and be merciful to our offender, realizing the amazing forgiveness and mercy given us by God
3. We are to submit to the supernatural desire to be merciful to victims of sin all around us, doing all we can to bring restoration for Christ's sake.

My prayer: Lord, help me to be merciful to others as You have been merciful to me. Let me be quick to forgive and do all I can to make restoration. And as I do, I know that I am truly blessed and will reap the mercy I will need on my life's journey. Amen.

I leave you with the lyrics from my song, "Let Me Show Mercy."

### **LET ME SHOW MERCY**

Craig Crawshaw

#### **CHORUS**

I will show mercy, for You have shown mercy to me  
The more that I give, more mercy will I receive  
The one who offends I will love as You loved on that tree  
Lord, let me show mercy, for mercy is what You show me

Remember our Savior who hung on that cross  
With all His accusers shouting their worst  
"Father, forgive them" He spoke clear and true  
"Those petulant people know not what they do" (repeat CHORUS)

Remember the debtor who pleaded for grace  
And when he received it, he turned about-face  
Expecting full payment from one who owed less  
And showing no mercy, brought greater distress (repeat CHORUS)

Remember the kindly Samaritan man  
When seeing a victim, he then changed his plan  
He showed his true nature by meeting a need  
Unlike those before him, showed mercy indeed (repeat CHORUS)

Let me show mercy, for mercy is what You show me  
Lord, let me show mercy, for mercy is what You show me