

The Beatitudes the Fifth Beatitude

by A.W. Pink

The fifth Beatitude, 'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy,' emphasizes the importance of mercifulness in the Christian life, which is a product of the new nature implanted by the Holy Spirit and is a source of satisfaction to God Himself.

Scripture: Psalm 18:25, Proverbs 11:17, Proverbs 14:21, Proverbs 21:21, Micah 7:18, Matthew 5:7, Matthew 6:15, Matthew 7:2, Galatians 6:7, 2 Timothy 1:16-18

Topics: "Mercy", "Character of a Believer"

Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes the significance of the fifth Beatitude, 'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy,' highlighting that true mercifulness is a reflection of the mercy received from God. He explains that this trait is not a prerequisite for receiving mercy but rather a natural outcome of being filled with Christ's love and grace. Pink clarifies that mercifulness involves compassion, forgiveness, and a non-retaliating spirit, which stems from the new nature given by the Holy Spirit. He warns against the misinterpretation of this Beatitude as a basis for salvation by works, asserting that it describes the character of genuine disciples. Ultimately, Pink concludes that the merciful will not only find joy in their actions but will also receive mercy from God and others.

Transcript

THE BEATITUDES

THE FIFTH BEATITUDE

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy"

Matthew 5:7

the first four Beatitudes, which have already been considered, a definite progression of spiritual awakening and transformation has been noted as one of the thrusts of our Lord's teaching. First, there is a discovery of the fact that I am nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing--poverty of spirit. Second, there is conviction of sin, a consciousness of guilt producing godly sorrow--mourning. Third, there is a renouncing of self-dependence and a taking of my place in the dust before God--meekness.

Fourth, there follows an intense longing after Christ and His salvation--hungering and thirsting after righteousness. But, in a sense, all of this is simply negative, for it is the believing sinner's perception of

what is defective in himself and a yearning for what is desirable. In the next four Beatitudes we come to the manifestation of positive good in the believer, the fruits of a new creation and the blessings of a transformed character. How this shows us, once more, the importance of noting that order in which God's truth is presented to us!

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." How grossly has this text been perverted by merit-mongers! Those who insist that the Bible teaches salvation by works appeal to this verse in support of their pernicious error. But nothing could be less to their purpose. Our Lord's purpose is not to set forth the foundation upon which the sinner's hope of mercy from God must rest, but rather it is to describe the character of His genuine disciples. Mercifulness is a prominent trait in this character.

According to our Lord's teaching, mercy is an essential feature of that holy character to which God has inseparably connected the enjoyment of His own sovereign kindness. Thus, there is nothing whatever in this verse that favors the erroneous teachings of Roman Catholicism. The position occupied by this Beatitude in its context is another key to its interpretation. The first four describe the initial exercises of heart in one who has been awakened by the Holy Spirit. In the preceding verse, the soul is seen hungering and thirsting after Christ, and then filled by Him.

Here we are shown the first effects and evidences of this filling. Having obtained mercy of the Lord, the saved sinner now exercises mercy. It is not that God requires us to be merciful in order that we might be entitled to His mercy, for that would overthrow the whole scheme of Divine grace! But having been the recipient of His wondrous mercy, I cannot help but now act mercifully toward others. What is mercifulness? It is a gracious disposition toward my fellow creatures and fellow Christians.

It is that kindness and benevolence that feels the miseries of others. It is a spirit that regards with compassion the sufferings of the afflicted. It is that grace that causes one to deal leniently with an offender and to scorn the taking of revenge. It is the forgiving spirit; it is the non-retaliating spirit; it is the spirit that gives up all attempt at self-vindication and would not return an injury for an injury, but rather good in the place of evil and love in the place of hatred.

That is mercifulness. Mercy being received by the forgiven soul, that soul comes to appreciate the beauty of mercy, and yearns to exercise toward other offenders similar grace to that which is exercised towards one's self (Dr. A. T. Pierson). The source of this merciful temper is not to be attributed to anything in our fallen human nature. It is true that there are some who make no profession of being Christians in whom we often see not a little of kindness of disposition, sympathy for the suffering, and a readiness to forgive those who have wronged them.

Admirable as this may be, from a purely human viewpoint, it falls far below that mercifulness upon which Christ here pronounced His benediction. The amiability of the flesh has no spiritual value, for its movements are neither regulated by the Scriptures nor exercised with any reference to the Divine authority. The mercifulness of this fifth Beatitude is that spontaneous outflow of a heart that is captivated by, and in love with, the mercy of God. The mercifulness of our text is the product of the new nature implanted by the Holy Spirit in the child of God.

It is called into exercise when we contemplate the wondrous grace, pity, and longsuffering of God toward such unworthy wretches as ourselves. The more I ponder God's sovereign mercy to me, the more I shall think of the unquenchable fire from which I have been delivered through the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. The more conscious I am of my indebtedness to Divine grace, the more mercifully I shall act toward those

who wrong, injure, and hate me. Mercifulness is one of the attributes of the spiritual nature that one receives at the new birth.

Mercifulness in the child of God is but a reflection of the abundant mercy that is found in his heavenly Parent. Mercifulness is one of the natural and necessary consequences of a merciful Christ indwelling us. It may not always be exercised; it may at times be stifled or checked by fleshly indulgence. But when the general tenor of a Christian's character and the main trend of his life are taken into account, it is clear that mercifulness is an unmistakable trait of the new man.

"The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again; but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth" (Ps. 37:21). It was mercy in Abraham, after he had been wronged by his nephew, that caused him to pursue and secure the deliverance of Lot (Gen. 14:1-16). It was mercy on the part of Joseph, after his brethren had so grievously mistreated him, that caused him to freely forgive them (Gen. 50:15-21). It was mercy in Moses, after Miriam had rebelled against him and the Lord had smitten her with leprosy, that caused him to cry, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee" (Num. 12:13).

It was mercy that caused David to spare the life of his enemy Saul when that wicked king was in his hands (1 Sam. 24:1-22; 26:1-25). In sad and striking contrast, of Judas it is said that he "remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man" (Ps. 109:16). In Romans 12:8 the Apostle Paul gives vital instruction concerning the spirit in which mercy is to be exercised: "he that showeth mercy" is to do so "with cheerfulness." The direct reference here is to the giving of money for the support of poor brethren, but this loving principle really applies to all compassion shown to the afflicted.

Mercy is to be exercised cheerfully, to demonstrate that it is not only done voluntarily but that it is also a pleasure. This spares the feelings of the one helped, and soothes the sorrows of the sufferer. It is this quality of cheerfulness that gives most value to the service rendered. The Greek word is most expressive, denoting joyful eagerness, a gladsome affability that makes the visitor like a sunbeam, warming the heart of the afflicted. Since Scripture tells us that "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7), we may be sure that the Lord takes note of the spirit in which we respond to His admonitions.

"For they shall obtain mercy." These words enunciate a principle or law that God has ordained in His government over our lives here on earth. It is summarized in that well-known word: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:Th). The Christian who is merciful in his dealings with others will receive merciful treatment at the hands of his fellows; for "with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:2). Therefore it is written, "He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour" (Prov. 21:21).

The one who shows mercy to others gains personally thereby: "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul" (Prov. 11:17a). There is an inward satisfaction in the exercise of benevolence and pity to which the highest gratification of the selfish man is not to be compared. "He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he" (Prov. 14:21b). The exercise of mercy is a source of satisfaction to God Himself: "He delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18). So must it be to us. "For they shall obtain mercy."

Not only does the merciful Christian gain by the happiness that accrues to his own soul through the exercise of this grace, not only will the Lord, in His overruling providence, make his mercifulness return again to him at the hands of his fellow men, but the Christian will also obtain mercy from God. This truth David declared: "With the merciful Thou wilt shew Thyself merciful" (Ps. 18:25). On the other hand, the Savior admonished His disciples with these words: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will

your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15).

"For they shall obtain mercy." Like the promises attached to the previous Beatitudes, this one also looks forward to the future for its final fulfillment. In 2 Timothy 1:16, 18, we find the Apostle Paul writing, "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus. . . . The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day." In Jude 21, the saints are also exhorted to be "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ"--this refers to the ultimate acknowledgement of us as His own redeemed people at His second coming in glory.

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