

Blessed are the Merciful

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Matthew 5:7 - "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

As Jesus continues discussing those who will be spiritually blessed, He emphasizes two aspects of mercy — human mercy, and God's mercy. Harken back to what Jesus said in His model prayer — "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," (Matt. 6:12), stating "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses," (Mat. 6:14-15).

God's mercy upon us cannot be separated from our mercy upon one another. While it is obviously true that merely being merciful towards others is not a "straight ticket to heaven," and certainly an honest reading of the Bible in its entirety will not lead one to infer that, it is also true that God's mercy **cannot** be obtained if we refuse to be merciful ourselves.

Far too many people desire God's forgiveness, but are unwilling themselves to forgive others. That doesn't mean, though, that forgiveness is automatic. In the Bible, forgiveness is always preceded by REPENTANCE (among other things). The same is the case from person to person. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and **if he repent**, forgive him" (Luke 17:3, emphasis mine throughout, TCG).

Some, like the disciples, may think that there is a limit to how many times we should forgive someone. After all, it can be extremely frustrating when people keep doing the same hurtful things to us. Peter asked, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" (Matt. 18:21). Jesus responded figuratively, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22). In other words, we should be willing to forgive a complete number of times (seventy times seven); that is to say, "as many times as it takes/occurs." There should never be a limit to how many times we show someone mercy. Using similar language, Jesus said "And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, **I repent**; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:4).

Finally, also consider the disproportionate amount we must forgive others, compared to how much the Father in heaven forgives us. Recall the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:23-35), in which a man is forgiven a great debt, but then goes and ruthlessly demands payment of a much smaller debt that someone owed him. This man ends up being mercilessly punished, because he was unwilling to show someone else mercy. This serves as an extremely important example of the principle of Matthew 5:7. May we all strive to be merciful, and may the Lord have mercy upon US!