

KINGDOM ATTRIBUTES

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

THEY WILL BE SHOWN MERCY

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God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. (Matthew 5:7, NLT)

What Is Mercy? How Can We Be Merciful And Be Blessed By God?

To understand what mercy is we also need to understand what grace is, and how they stand in relationship to one another. Mercy and grace are both communicable attributes of God, which means that they are qualities that God has that we as humans can also have. This is in contrast to qualities such as omnipotence, that God has but we humans cannot have.

God's grace is God's goodness towards those who deserve only punishment. This is our state as sinners before we are saved through faith in Jesus. When we believe the gospel and ask Jesus into our life we are saved by God's grace. God does not have to bestow this grace, and thereby forgiveness on us, but He chooses to do so. It is God's free gift; we do not have a right to expect it. If we had a right to it by anything we could do it would not be grace.

God's mercy is God's goodness towards those in misery and distress. Through God's mercy we are delivered from the consequences of sin in our lives and can start to be restored to a right relationship with God. Through His mercy God is able to work in our hearts and in our lives to heal us from the harm that sin leads us into.

Grace brings forgiveness, mercy brings healing. This is an important distinction; they are not the same thing. We can also see that one can only experience the mercy of God once one has received the grace of God. Unless one has forgiveness for sins through repentance one cannot begin to be relieved of the consequences that arise from that sin because you would still be living in it.

The beatitudes.

In Matthew chapter 5 Jesus is explaining to the people and his disciples, what the Christian life should be like and this description follows a logical progression.

Verse 3 and 4: The poor, or sinners, realise their need for God and His mercy, and by repentance they enter the Kingdom of heaven. This is not something that can be done humanly but God blesses and comforts them.

Verse 5: God blesses those who are humble, and this humility comes when sinners realise that they need God to forgive their sins because they cannot do it themselves.

Verse 6: Because they have been saved from their sins they realise that they need righteousness, to be made right with God. This implies an understanding of God's laws and standards and seeking justice is part of this process. Justice is God's law in action.

Verse 7: Because God has shown them mercy they are able to show mercy to others as well. As Christians we have received mercy from God and we are called upon to show mercy to others.

We must note that in this process repentance comes before mercy. If we do not repent of our sins and turn away from them we cannot begin to experience God's mercy in making things right again. This also shows that we must be Christians to show Christian mercy. The actions should arise from our belief; we cannot do this by our own efforts. Without the help of the Holy Spirit we can achieve little, but when the Holy Spirit moves in our life we can achieve great things.

Mercy is not just having an easy-going attitude to the laws of God. It is not just an easy way of getting out of situations by not being bothered or concerned when God's laws or standards are being ignored. It is easy to forgive something that does not really bother you, and also easy to avoid confrontation if this makes our life easier. But the laws of God are not to be taken lightly, as God is a Holy God and is totally righteous. God cannot ignore any transgressions against His laws, as this would be to change His essential nature of holiness. God is merciful, but He is also holy. Mercy cannot contradict God's holiness or righteousness.

Matthew 18:23-35 - No Repentance, No Mercy

In this parable Jesus tells the story of a king who checks up on his accounts and finds that a servant has borrowed a large amount of money, without permission, equivalent to 340 tons of silver. The king ordered that the man be sold into slavery because of the debt but the man begged for patience as he would pay the money back, and the king released him and paid the debt himself. But the man did not repent or ask forgiveness from the king. This servant then went out and met another servant who owed him a much smaller amount, a hundred days wages. This servant begged the first servant for time to pay but the first servant had him thrown into jail instead. When the king found out what had happened he had the first servant arrested and thrown into prison and tortured until he had paid the entire debt. The king said:

"Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?" Verse 33

The problem was that the first servant had not repented, or acknowledged that he had done anything wrong, and therefore could not receive mercy; it had no meaning for him. Because of this he was unable to show it to the second servant, even though he had been relieved of a far bigger debt himself.

As Christians we have received God's mercy in our lives and we are called upon to show mercy to others because of this. Jesus gives us a warning in verse 35, *"That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."*

This is not to be taken lightly!

Luke 15:11-32 - Mercy After Repentance.

This is the story of the prodigal son, who left his family and took his share of the inheritance and wasted his money in wild living. Eventually he ended up feeding pigs, the ultimate indignity for a Jew. He realised that he had done a foolish thing and decided to return home and become a hired servant for his father, rather than a son, as this would be better than what he was doing. *"His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'"* Luke 15:21

He had repented of what he had done and asked his father for forgiveness. He realised that he had offended against his father and asked for forgiveness and he was forgiven. But his father not only forgave him but also had mercy upon him, showed goodness towards him, and restored him to his position as a son:

"But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began." Luke 15:22-24.

Mercy came after repentance.

Mercy is an attribute of God that we are called upon to exercise in our Christian lives. Mercy is the putting right of the consequences of sin and wrongdoing and follows from repentance and grace, which forgives us of our sins. Grace brings forgiveness and mercy brings healing. God has shown us all mercy and we are called upon to show mercy to others. Matthew 5:7 tells us that God blesses the merciful and they will be shown mercy.