

## Lesson 7: Living the Gospel

As we discovered in our previous lesson, we have been learning how to seek God and be delivered from the self-centered appetite of our hearts. We also learned that this is an initial occurrence resulting in justification before God, as well as a continual process whereby God sanctifies our hearts in greater and greater measure. Dependence upon God through faith has been our resounding and essential theme throughout our study. As we have been learning how to depend upon God for deliverance, we shall now, in our final lessons, learn how to depend upon God to make us a blessing to the world where we were once a curse.

### Turn to Matthew 5:7-12 and read aloud

These last four beatitudes concern our lives toward others and highlight the ways we ought to love our neighbors. These are the manner in which the righteousness of God becomes manifest in us. The first two fall into the category of how we should live out the gospel, and the last two focus on how we ought to carry forth the good news of the gospel and the subsequent responses that will be received when we share this good news. In this lesson, we will focus on the first two of these last four beatitudes.

The definition of mercy is somewhat complicated to derive. It flows from the character God and must be defined in a way that does not undermine any other attribute of God. Mercy can be thought of as judgment forgone, or as one not receiving proper punishment, suffering, or misery incurred. However, mercy cannot be administered in a way that would nullify the justice of God. God hates sin and naturally He cannot tolerate its presence in heaven. He cannot forgive sin without the sin being forsaken and the penalty due paid. Mercy cannot be rendered to an individual on an eternal scale for the eternal punishment for sin if the person still remains a sinner and has a heart that is utterly opposed to the rule of God.

The only way that God can forgo eternal damnation and punishment upon the soul of a sinner is for the wages of that sin to be satisfied. If the debt for a crime is paid in full, the criminal is free to go. Sin causes an infinite gap between us and God, the source of all life, because God is infinitely great and His infinite greatness is offended with an infinite magnitude (**Isaiah 59:2**). Therefore, the sinner is separated from the life of God and experiences the wages of sin, which is death, not only in a physical sense, but in a spiritual sense and in an eternal sense (**Rom. 6:23**). Therefore he must not merely be saved from the eternal wages of sin, but must be saved from the sin itself which causes spiritual death and separation from God. God will not allow a sinner into heaven.

It must be understood that God does not have to practice mercy toward anyone. He is not obligated to accept Christ's sacrifice for our sins or administer saving grace, no matter the measure of our faith. It is because of His great love that He renders mercy toward those who believe in Him by accepting Jesus' sacrifice for their sins (**John 3:16, Rom. 5:8**). Belief is necessary because unbelief is the root of all our sin and gives us the identity of sinner (**Rom. 14:23**). It is because God is good that He has promised to all who trust in Him the forgiveness of sins. A fruit of genuine faith is confession of one's own sinfulness and helplessness before God (**I John 1:8-10**). Proverbs promises us that only through confession and forsaking of our sin can we receive mercy and forgiveness from God, but if we hide our sin we will not prosper (**Prov. 28:13**).

Now that we have considered God's mercy toward us, we must consider how men ought to imitate this beautiful moral attribute of God toward one another. Whereas God is the eternal judge over all the heavens and earth, we are mere subjects to His kingdom. When people sin against us, truly their sin is toward God and they are accountable to Him (**Luke 15:21, Matt. 25:31-46**). Therefore, we really have no right to hold sin against someone; only God and His ordained law enforcements have that right. "“Vengeance is mine, I will repay” says the Lord” (**Rom. 12:19**). Furthermore, Jesus illustrates to a group of Pharisees that only one who is without sin may hold sin against a sinner (**John 8:1-11**). Therefore, Jesus taught His disciples that if they did not forgive others, they would not be forgiven (**Matt. 6:14-15**). The blessed of God are those who practice mercy toward others.

### **Turn to Micah 6:8 and read aloud**

Do you love mercy? Do you leap at the opportunity to forgive someone or do you seek revenge or wish it upon those who offend you? Do you pray for your enemies and bless those who curse you, not just in word, but in heart, or do you resent them? (**Matt. 5:43-48**). We are called to love mercy and leap at the opportunity to practice it. We must leap at the opportunity to not hold a grudge, to not be bitter toward someone.

Not only are we called to love practicing mercy toward those who offend us, but we are to practice the opposite of offense toward others – justice. We are to treat people rightly, regardless of the way they treat us. The second beatitude we are referring to in this lesson is purity of heart. To do justly, the heart must be pure. The heart represents our desires and intentions. The fruit of our heart's condition is our actions and our words (**Mark 7:21-23**). Therefore, to do justly, we must first have hearts set on righteousness and justice. Our intention toward our neighbor ought is pure only when it esteems others above self (**Phil. 2:3-4**). If we serve someone for selfish gain or to appear spiritual before men, we are not serving with purity of heart, therefore true Christian service is more than just service; it is pure-hearted service (**Matt. 6:1-4**). Where you once gave your self preeminence, now you must give preeminence to all others and serve them as though you were serving the Lord Jesus.

The pure in heart shall see God. This is obvious in the eternal sense, because scripture says we will one day behold Him face to face. However, just as with the other beatitudes, there is an application of that promise in the here and now. All things have been created for Him and by Him and truly all things point to Him. Therefore, the more our hearts are purified, the more we shall see God at work in every situation. We will be willing to serve others, because we can serve them as unto the Lord. We can have mercy with the worst of enemies, because we know in whom we have believed and that He is the justifier of all who are His; we have nothing to prove but Christ and Him crucified (**I Cor. 2:2**).

To live out the gospel is to love your neighbor as yourself, for in this is the fulfillment of the law (**Rom. 13:9, Gal. 5:14, James 2:8**). Forgiving others when they wrong us and then going out of our way to do right in serving and giving to others should be our mainstay in life. We should seek to love having mercy on those who harm us, do justly to all, and walk in these attitudes with humble dependence upon God's grace. Ask God to show you where you fall short in these areas and pray that He would continue to sanctify and grow you in a heart of mercy and purity.