

ST. SIMEON ANGLICAN CHURCH, OFF FUTA ROAD, AKURE

BIBLE STUDY, 16/04/2008

STUDY 5

COMPASSIONATE AND MERCIFUL SPIRIT

Matthew 5:7

To be merciful is to be moved with empathy and pity for those who are miserable and in need. God "saved us according to His mercy" (Titus 3:5), for Jesus served as the "merciful and faithful High Priest" (Hebrews 2:17), coming to us "while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8) and undeserving of mercy. We must not only bear our own afflictions patiently, but we must, by Christian sympathy, partake of the afflictions of our brethren; pity must be shown (Job 6:14), and *bowels of mercy put on* (Colossians 3:12); and, we must contribute all we can for the assistance of those who are any way in misery. We must have compassion on the souls of others, and help them; pity the ignorant, and instruct them; the careless, and warn them; those who are in a state of sin, and snatch them as *brands out of the burning*. We must have compassion on those who are in sorrow, and comfort them (Job 16:5); on those who are in want, and supply them; which if we refuse to do, whatever we pretend, we *shut up the bowels of our compassion*, James 2:15–16; 1 John. 3:17. *Draw out they soul by dealing thy bread* to the hungry, Isaiah 58:7, 10. *A good man is merciful to his beast*. 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, we cannot help but now act mercifully toward others.

1. The nature of mercy

Matthew 5:7; Luke 10:30–37; Jude 22; I Peter 2:21–23; Romans 12:8; Luke 15:18–20; II Corinthians 2:6–8; Proverbs 14:31; Daniel 4:27

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." This mercifulness is a holy compassion of soul, whereby one is moved to pity and go to the relief of another in misery. It is a willingness to forgo personal ease, interest or gratification to make others easy and happy". It is in contrast with foolish sentimentality which flouts the requirements of justice; which inclines many to sympathise with those in deserved misery; and which is generous to some and harsh to others. This kind of false and unholy mercy petitions the powers that be to cancel or modify a just and fully merited sentence which has been passed upon some flagrant offender. Therefore are we told, "and *of some* have compassion, making a difference"—king Saul defied this principle when he spared Agag.

The holy compassion of soul is a gracious disposition toward our 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. 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.

2. Mercy: an unmistakable trait of the new man

Matthew 5:7; Psalm 37:21; Genesis 14:1–16; Genesis 50:15–21; Numbers 12:13; I Samuel 24:1–22; 26:1–25; 30:17–24; Psalm 109:16

The mercifulness of our text is the product and one of the attributes of the spiritual nature that one receives at the new birth 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. Mercifulness in the child of God is but a reflection of the abundant mercy that is found in his heavenly parent. It is one of the natural and necessary consequences of a merciful Christ indwelling us. "The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again; but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth". It was "mercy" in Abraham, after he had been wronged by his nephew, which caused him to go after and secure the deliverance of Lot. It was "mercy" on the part of Joseph, after his brethren had so grievously mistreated him, which moved him to freely forgive them. It was "mercy" in Moses, after Miriam had rebelled against him and the Lord had smitten her with leprosy, which moved him to cry, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee". It was "mercy" in David which caused him to spare the life of his archenemy when the wicked Saul was in his hands. In contrast, we read "he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man". Mercy is to be exercised cheerfully, to demonstrate that it is not only done voluntarily but that it is also a pleasure.

3. The reward of the merciful

Matthew 5:7; Proverbs 11:17; 14:21; Psalm 18:25; James 2:13; II Timothy 1:16, 18; Jude 21; Romans 12:10; Galatians 6:2; Colossians 3:12; Psalm 37:26

"For they shall obtain mercy." First, there is an *inward benefit*. The one who shows mercy to others gains thereby: "the merciful man doeth good to his own soul". There is a personal satisfaction in the exercise of pity and benevolence, which the fullest gratification of the selfish man is not to be compared with: "he that hath mercy on the poor, *happy* is he". Second, he reaps mercy at the hands of his *fellows*: the overruling providence of God causes him to be dealt with mercifully by others. Third, he receives mercy from *God*: "with the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful". The merciful shall find with God *sparing* mercy (Matthew 6:14), *supplying* mercy (Proverbs 19:17), *sustaining* mercy (Psalm 41:2), mercy in that day (II Timothy 1:18); and they shall *inherit the kingdom prepared for them* (Matthew 25:34–35); whereas *they shall have judgment without mercy who have shown no mercy*.