

MATTHEW 5:7

When something is stated in the positive in the Scriptures, in most cases the negative of it is also true. When we are told that a certain kind of sinful behavior ends in tragic results, to forfeit that course of action will also negate a fateful consummation. In Jesus' sermon on the mount, Matthew records the following statement, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy (5:7). This is a positive statement from our lord deserving full acceptance. A good action on our part (the showing of mercy toward others) results in our receiving mercy from God. The negative is also true; if we fail to show mercy in this life, God will not show mercy on the Day of Judgment.

This verse, therefore, condemns all types of unmerciful behavior. Cruel punishments given children by their parents is condemned. There is a difference in godly discipline and ungodly punishment.

Those who would harm others by what they say are condemned. Words are very powerful. They can tarnish or even ruin another man's reputation. Even though we may strongly disagree with another's beliefs and opinions this does not give us the right to slander, harm, degrade, and belittle that individual in trying to prove our point. Even if we are right in our assessment and the other individual is in error, we cannot be unmerciful and then hope to receive mercy ourselves.

We are to discipline those in our society that violate the principles of God and man. We have civil law and a judicial system which tries to handle the load. To say that we cannot execute this system of criminal punishment because that is being unmerciful is not true. To be merciful is to imply a kindness and forbearance in the fair and proper discipline of those who have been unruly. When one knows the result of breaking the law, decides to break it anyway, and is caught, they are by necessity to be given the punishment prescribed in that law. If however, we go further in our punishment than the law prescribes, we are not showing due mercy. Mercy has an element of compassion and sympathy which even in the face of transgression will seek the best for the other person.

The great playwright, William Shakespeare once said (Merchant of Venice, Act I V, Scene 1),

"The quality of mercy is not strained.

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath o It is twice bless 'd:

It, blesses him that gives and him that takes.

'Tis mightiest in the mightiest. It becomes

The throned monarch better than his crown."

As far as Christians are concerned, our showing of mercy is unconditional if we expect, to receive mercy from God. We must be careful how we judge other people, and we must forgive those who sin against us. Our PSA (Positive Spiritual Attitude) can now grow because happiness comes from a life that can give mercy to others full well knowing mercy is flowing from heaven toward us.

More next week...