

Biblical-Philosophical Psychology 123-Spiritual virtues 63 (Beatitude #5: Merciful)

Bible Doctrines (The True-Good-Beautiful)

T/G/B

- Eschatology
- Thanatology
- Ecclesiology
- Israelology
- Dispensationalism
- Doxology
- Hodology
- Soteriology
- Hamartiology
- Natural Law
- Anthropology
- Angelology
- Pneumatology
- Christology
- Paterology
- Trinitarianism
- Cosmology
- Theology Proper
- Bibliology

John 8:32; Matt. 22:37-39; Job 42:5-6. The Bible speaks of the church growing up into adulthood (Eph. 4:13). Yet it seems that the church continues to be set on lowering the bar as well as trying to convince the world that we really are like them. This is not what Christ or the Bible teaches. We are different and have so much more to offer in every way—spiritually, intellectually, psychologically (Psa. 23; Heb. 2:14-15; SOS; Eph. 5:31-32; 2 Cor. 10:5).

Outline of today's class in our advancement in total truth (1:15): 10 minutes on main point of the spiritual life: loving of God (this slide); 15 minutes on epistemology (10 points); 50 minutes of going into more doctrinal depth (mercy and forgiveness).

Love--While concepts like relaxed mental attitude (RMA) are invaluable in handling difficult circumstances & people so we do not get out of fellowship and the Holy Spirit can produce in us spiritual love, RMA in and of itself should never be equated with love, either for God or man. Love, whether one is talking about food, people, sex, or God is always a desire for that object—an attraction to the object of love, Psa. 42:1-2; Jn 3:19. Love is complicated because man has spiritual appetites, intellectual appetites, and sense appetites. As a matter of fact, our whole lives revolve around love, either licit or illicit. When we sin it is because we love that sin, either intellectually or sensually. Thus, the need for transformation of appetites. The reason one cannot love Mammon and God is because love for Mammon will translate, at best, into simply using God for more Mammon. God's love for us translates to love for our good.

Hermeneutics

Linguistics

Epistemology 12

-Existence 50

Metaphysics -32

-Trans. 50

Reality -Logic 32,

-Truth 32

P.R. - 32

Stage 3 – Christian metaphysician = life of glory!

- Metaphysical understanding of God, creation, the spiritual life, man, and Bible doctrine.
- Transcendent relationship with God rather than nominal relationship with God.

Stage 3

Holy Spirit  Bible Doctrine

Stage 2 – Christian doctrinal believer = life of doctrine!

- Still Nominal understanding of God.
- Increase in perinoetic truth about God & the spiritual life. However, still plagued with pagan philosophy in view of God's nature due to lack of metaphysics, which is due to modernism's philosophical assumptions.
- He has become more stable, but still very dependent on others for confidence in absolute truths.
- Orientation still more about words than the reality.

Stage 2

Holy Spirit  Bible Doctrine

Stage 1 – Christian baby = life of ups and downs.

- Utilitarian understanding of God.
- All baby believers have a great deal of pagan views of God due to pagan horizon of meaning. All baby believers are tossed here and there by kosmos diabolicus, Eph. 4:14.
- For baby believers it is primarily about pragmatism. In other words, if it works or feels good, they think it must be true.

Stage 1

EPISTEMOLOGY: #12

1. Epistemology is that branch of philosophy that seeks to answer the question, “Why do you believe that?” It establishes the various rules and principles for justified beliefs to determine if one is within his epistemic rights to believe x, y, z. In other words, the epistemologist attempts to identify principles of evaluation of beliefs and knowledge claims. The principles that are available to evaluate beliefs is what epistemology is all about.
2. A realist epistemologist understands the nature of knowledge (theory of knowledge), the knower, the object of knowledge and how to apply valid criteria to knowledge claims. To become an epistemologist is to be able to ferret out the false from the true, not only in theology and Bible doctrine, but also how to evaluate shows like *Cosmos*.

EPISTEMOLOGY: #12

3. It is important to understand that epistemology, like all areas of philosophy, is all about the use of reason. It is neither Christian nor anti-Christian. It is preeminently rational. Christianity affirms that God has bestowed on man the ability to make correct inferences to discover certain truths with their own natural faculties (cf., Rom. 1:20; 2:14-16).

EPISTEMOLOGY: #12

4. Epistemological realism is concerned with defending what is real. It seeks to give an account of how you know in the mind what is in the world. Historically, it often finds itself defending what is real against the “claims” of
 - a. agnostics,
 - b. skeptics, and
 - c. fideists.

EPISTEMOLOGY: #12

5. Epistemological rights. Although one does not have to prove something for it to be true (cf., history), it is important to be able to give epistemic justification for what you believe.
 - a. Atheists violate their epistemic right when they reject miracles in light of the fact that the universe was created out of nothing.
 - b. Deists violate their epistemic responsibilities when they affirm God's creation of everything, but that He is no longer able to perform miracles, to violate the laws in creation.
 - c. Bible believers violate their epistemic rights when they do not believe the Word of God.
 - d. Fideists live in violation of their epistemic responsibilities because they just believe willy-nilly, because they want to. Epistemology is about reality, not opinions or wishes or sloppy thinking.

EPISTEMOLOGY: #12

6. Goals of epistemology require principles to evaluate and critique certain claims.
 - a. Twofold goal: To acquire true beliefs and to avoid false beliefs
 - b. However, acquiring true beliefs and avoiding false beliefs is not sufficient.
 - c. We also want to be able to give reasons, some sort of rationale for our beliefs, e.g., “I know this because x, y, z.”
 - d. Increasingly, Christianity is being accused of being irrational. The modern world charges us with violating our epistemic responsibilities as rational beings.

EPISTEMOLOGY: #12

7. Epistemology enables us to understand the distinction between believing (πιστεύοντες) and knowing (γινώσκοντες).
 - a. I may believe that my wife is on her way home from work, but if she is not then I really do not know it; I merely believe it. There must be conformity of the mind to the thing for it to be knowledge.
 - b. While belief in general can be false, knowledge is never false. False knowledge is no knowledge at all, but false belief still is belief.
 - c. Belief admits of degrees of confidence whereas knowledge does not.
 - d. You can suspend belief pending more investigation, but you can never suspend knowledge pending more investigation. It is absurd to speak of suspending knowledge until more information arrives.
 - e. True belief and knowledge are very similar. Both are conformity to facts. We will get into these weeds later.

EPISTEMOLOGY: #12

8. Some beliefs are the results of misdirected passions, wishes, and sloppy thinking, and false views of the nature of man (Cartesianism). Certain beliefs are epistemologically illicit, like Mormon beliefs. Others are viable like historic Christianity and the cosmological argument for the existence of God.
9. The epistemologist is not concerned with what feels good or is “practical.” He is concerned with truth and understands the dangers of sloppy, haphazard beliefs about God and reality as such. He is concerned with justification of beliefs.
10. Everyone is already engaged in some type of epistemology, valid or illicit. We need to understand the rules of knowledge so we can objectively evaluate the various truth claims to show why such truth claims as atheism, deism, Cartesianism, and Islam are false, and biblical Christianity is true. The study of epistemology will enable the believer to defend his beliefs on a rational level, without even having to use the Bible as the *starting* point.

Christ's Eightfold Concept of Blessedness

#1 **μακάριοι** are the **poor in spirit**: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

#2 **μακάριοι** are those **who mourn**: for they shall be comforted.

#3 **μακάριοι** are the **gentle**: for they shall inherit the earth.

#4 **μακάριοι** are **those who hunger and thirst for righteousness**: for they shall be satisfied.

#5 **μακάριοι** are the **merciful**: for they shall receive mercy.

#6 **μακάριοι** are the **pure in heart**: for they shall see God.

#7 **μακάριοι** are the **peacemakers**: for they shall be called sons of God.

#8 **μακάριοι** are those **who have been persecuted** for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 **μακάριοι** are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. 12 "Rejoice, and be glad, for **your reward in heaven is great**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- ✓ Christ culminates His paradoxical beatitudes with the inference that death is the last and greatest blessing on earth. However, our modern culture conspires to make us believe that our meaning and destiny are in this world. If there is anything that is disreputable, or contemptible in polite circles today, it is talk about death and the next life. "What do you think will happen to you after you die?" "Well, I suppose I shall enter into eternal bliss, but I do not like to contemplate such depressing subjects."

Jesus Concept of Blessedness [objective goodness of soul with resulting subjective contentment]

#1 - μακάριοι are the **poor in spirit**

#2- μακάριοι are those **who mourn**.

#3- μακάριοι are the **gentle/πραῦς**

#4- μακάριοι are **those who hunger and thirst [love] for righteousness**

#5- μακάριοι are the **merciful**: for they shall receive mercy.

1. All of these virtues are supernatural gifts from God. Reflect on how the unbeliever and carnal believer lack capacity for these beatitudes. Furthermore, the quality of a person's character is always tied to their orientation.
2. In fact, both believers and carnal believers seek/love their opposites: pride, positive self-esteem, arrogance/rebellion against God, and love for mammon rather than God. Likewise, they lack capacity for divine mercy, especially in light of the fact that they have no consciousness of divine mercy in their own lives to apply to others.

Mercy

#5- μακάριοι are the **merciful (ἐλεήμονες)**: for they shall receive mercy.

1. Jesus is not teaching a consequentialist's view of mercy. To give mercy to receive mercy is not mercy at all, for that would more akin to justice. Same with love. To love to get love really is only love for yourself. We give mercy that the other may get mercy. Only by giving without the intention of getting mercy, do we get mercy from God who started this chain of mercy giving.
2. Although mercy involves forgiveness, being merciful is not the same as forgiving someone, excusing someone, or justifying what someone may have done. To be merciful is to treat a person less harshly than one has a *right* to treat that person. One can forgive someone for embezzling funds, but still demand repayment or legal punishment.

Mercy

3. Our only hope with God is in His mercy, not His justice. It was His mercy that redeemed us, raised us higher than the angels, and united us with Himself, Eph. 2:4-10. The Bible instructs us to model His mercy in our lives with others.
4. All of the beatitudes (cf., brokenness, mourning, gentleness, passion for righteousness) include not only human intellection, but also affections, sentiments, and passions. It is unfortunate that our modern world, including large sections of the Biblical community and Christian psychologists, has rejected philosophical-biblical psychology and has adopted the evolutionary model (via William James, Freud, Hume) and the dichotomous view of man (Descartes) which have flattened all of these human sensibilities into the one term “emotions,” which is viewed as a non-rational physiological feature. This is not biblical.

Mercy

5. Human affections and passions respond to the direction of reason. Therefore, the key is the intellect with its norms and standards. A person must decide to forgive and show mercy before his affections, sentiments, and passions can be redirected. An angry person must decide to stop seeking redress for the injustice before his feelings of anger can be overcome.
6. The angry or wrathful person must apprehend the injustice in such a way that it ceases to provoke anger. In other words, the intentional object of the passion must be reshaped, so that the sense appetite no longer sees it as a present evil that must be eliminated. Unless the angry person reevaluates the situation, anger will continue to smolder whenever the injustice comes to mind, even if a decision has been made to forgive.

Mercy

7. The forgiveness that is necessary for mercy is a process, and the initial decision to forgive only begins it. There must be a conviction that redress is not necessary before the feelings and passions can be affected.
8. Anger may return when a person thinks about the injustice. In order to remove the anger, the infuriating aspects of the injustice must be reevaluated in such a way that the angry person comes to conclude that even these aspects do not require redress. Then the anger will again fade of its own accord—in some cases more easily than in others, depending upon the emotional provocation of the injustice and its complexity.

Mercy

9. When the injustice is minor, it is relatively easy to reframe an injustice so that it can be forgiven. For example, if a good friend annoys you, it is easy to forgive him given other factors related to the friendship.
10. However, when the injustice is serious—when the harm done is permanent and especially destructive—lack of desire for redress requires supernatural faith in God. Grave harm is extremely difficult to forgive, and only God has sufficient power to set things right, even if only in the next life.
11. Therefore the removal of anger and *desire* for vengeance toward someone who has done us grave and irreparable harm requires the theological/supernatural virtues: faith in God's power and providence; hope that He will act to overcome the injustice; and the love that chooses forgiveness. It is impossible to forgive grave and irreparable harm without explicit faith in God.

12. Forgiveness and mercy are not incompatible with desire for earthly justice. One can forgive a murderer over time so that there is no longer any anger, but still desire that the murderer be punished to protect society and to honor the victim's memory.

13. Forgiveness is the first step to reconciliation with enemies as well as well as friends and loved ones. The key is not to just say "I forgive." There must be a reevaluation before the feelings will change.

Matthew 5:7 – blessed are the merciful

1. This mercy is a supernatural gift from God and connected to the previous beatitudes (poverty, mournful about self, humble, and passion for God).
2. This mercy is an application of the first and second great commandment. Consciousness of God's love, compassion, and mercy always translates to love, compassion, and mercy toward others. It does not work the other way: we do not serve man to worship of God.
3. Is not being merciful a divine thing? We are to do for others what God has done for us. Unbelievers and carnal believers do not have the capacity for divine love, forgiveness, or mercy. Only those who have really felt the gift of mercy can resonate with giving mercy to others. Our own mercifulness to others is a good reflection of the amount of mercy we feel from God. Recall that the first Christians were the first to build hospitals in Western Civilization.

Matthew 5:43-48 – the Law of Love

1. Accounts of forgiveness and mercy that does not include love are insufficient. Love must continue for forgiveness to continue. This also applies to self, apart from healthy love of self there can be no forgiveness of self, only self-loathing and alienation from self. Love always desires good. To see bad is not forgiving.
2. Believers are not to live unbelievers or animals. We are not to give in to the natural inclination to strike back with hatred and revenge. We are to allow no stirring of malice in our feelings. We are to be in control of our attitudes and affections. It is hard to hate a man we pray for, or pray for a man we hate.
3. God's way should be our way. As His children, we are to take God as our example of love and forgiveness. God loves all men apart from any regard to their character, therefore He gives to all men apart from character, and if they do not have His best gifts it is only because they have chosen not to take them.
4. The reward Christ promises is likeness to God the Father. To become more complete as His child – be perfect as your Father in heaven. There can be no true forgiveness or mercy apart from true love. Only love removes the hate.

Matthew 18:21-35- Forgiven and Unforgiving

1. Matthew 18:21-22. Our standards or Christ's standards on forgiveness? Note Peter's assumed "generosity" in contrast to Christ's directives of indefinite and endless forgiveness. Why is this so hard? Is it impossible?
2. The king and his debtor, 18:23-27. The analogy is with immense magnitude of our sins against God, both in the amount and kind (talent = 50-80 pound measure of gold). Every sin against God is large. Every sin is rebellion against God and treasonous. "I will pay you everything," is an easy promise but an impossible fulfillment. There is no way we can repay God. The king became merciful, this applies to God who became merciful in sending His Son.

Matthew 18:21-35- Forgiven and Unforgiving

3. The unforgiving forgiven, Matthew 18:28-31. Unlike the King, he had no compassion, not even for such a small amount? (denarii = 16 cents, a days wages) How awful! What a monster! Yet, we all are guilty of doing this, and often. Have you never treasured up someone else's shortcomings or become occupied with trivial offenses against you? We are to recognize our debt to God, its forgiveness, and then forgive others.
4. From mercy to mercy, Matthew 12:32-35. "Even as I have had mercy" is what God tells us in our dealings with others. The world has its own model, but Christ shows us God's forgiveness as our model which is complete and inexhaustible recipients of mercy we can pass on to others, which inclines and enables us to forgive. Note how he falls back in the ranks of the unforgiven because he does not forgive. Note God's righteous indignation! The unmercifulness of Christian people is a worse evil than many other evils. The forgiven unforgiving person was put back in his former state. Failure to forgive leads to a life of carnality.

John 13:34-35 – A New Kind of Love

1. Wow! What a tremendous standard! The wishes from dying lips. This is a new object of love, and a new measure of love, and a new kind of love. and a new motive. It is as applicable today as it was then, see 1 John 3:16.
2. The new scope of the new commandment. The divisions between people then was worst than it is today, especially with regard to women. Paul speaks of these divisions. This is truly a new thing in the world. Never anything like this breaking of all bonds and coming together under Him. A community held together by love and not by geography, race, gender, or linguistic affinities. Stronger love than separating tendencies.
3. Every believer is under obligation to recognize his relationship with all other believers. far greater than the superficial differences. The mind with its norms and standards affects the affections and passions, so it is not all about emotions. What we have in common far exceeds our differences.

James 1:27 – Godly Compassion for those in Need

1. “Religion” (θρησκεία, worship, devotion) is not to be understood as per a religion or creed. It refers to expression of religion. It refers to a worship and a binding relationship with God. Context deals with various forms of self-deception where one listens to Bible doctrine but then does not bridle the tongue or care about those in need.
2. We have two duties in play in a relationship with God: helping others and keeping one pure before God, which is necessary for growth. We need to be concerned about our own spiritual life but never to the neglect of others. How does selfish religion sound? Oxymoron?