

Acts of Mercy

Intro

- Gifts that give...

Romans 12:3-8

3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

“Having gifts, let us use them” (v. 3-6)

- We *have* gifts...
- These gifts are the product of *grace*. (Not raw human effort; not what we merit or deserve).
- Spiritual Gifts = Divine enablement beyond our natural resources/abilities in order to serve God's purposes.

“These are concrete expressions of the grace of God at work in the life of individuals for the sake of others.”

–**Gordon Fee**, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, 607

- “God, how do you want to use me to love your people today?”
- Variety of gifts...

“There is no spiritual gift that all believers have, yet there is some general ability similar to every gift that all Christians have.” –**Wayne Grudem**, *Systematic Theology*, 1023

“The one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness” (v. 8)

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” (**Matthew 5:7**)

“Mercy relieves the consequences of sin in the lives of others (both sinners and those sinned against).” –**Sinclair Ferguson**, *The Sermon on the Mount: Kingdom Life in a Fallen World*, 31

- Mercy internalizes God’s work of redemption and restoration. It interrupts the normal trajectory of “sin and misery.”

“What is meant by mercifulness? I answer, it is a melting disposition whereby we lay to heart the miseries of others and are ready on all occasions to be instrumental for their good.”
–**Thomas Watson**, *The Beatitudes*, 110

- When mercy comes into contact with offenses in fallen relationships, it looks like *forgiveness*. When mercy comes into contact with needs in a fallen world, it looks like *compassion* and *provision*.
- *The gift of mercy is an expression of God’s grace through his people to relieve fallen conditions.*
- There are layers of need (Heb. 4:16). We experience a sense of alienation in a fallen world on a variety of levels:
 - Physical Needs
 - Emotional Needs
 - Relational Needs
 - Spiritual Needs

“For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’” (**Deut. 15:11**)

- Being *attentive* to needs...
 - Bringing your **prayer**
"Be constant in prayer." (v. 12)
 - Bringing your **provision**
"Contribute to the needs of the saints..." (v. 13)
 - Bringing your **presence**
"...and seek to show hospitality." (v. 13)

- God loves a "cheerful giver" of mercy!

"Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight." (v. 16)

"Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back.... 35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:30, 35-36)

- The mercy of Jesus is glorified in this.

Discussion Guide

- What's your personal history and experience with the topic of spiritual gifts? What are some spiritual gifts that you believe the Lord has led you to minister in? Are there any gifts you believe you haven't been stewarding and using recently?

- Why does the gift of mercy require supernatural grace and the power of the Spirit in order to use it? How do the complexities and layers of need in a fallen world challenge us as we seek to show mercy?

- How has God led you to show mercy to the needy? What are some tangible ways that you have given and served in order to bring relief to those in suffering or poverty? Think about ways you bring your:
 - *Prayer*
 - *Provision*
 - *Presence*

- In what ways are you freshly aware of God's mercy toward you?