

# SPIRITUAL GIFT OF MERCY

## THE POTENTIAL TO BE CHEERFUL

There are three key words in this verse on mercy.

First word - acts.

Second word - mercy.

Third word - cheerfulness.

The gift of mercy sounds like the kind of gift I would like.

I like to be active, and I like to be cheerful.

### I Paul saw a church of action and interaction.

When we read verses 9 - 21 we see they are action-packed verses.

Genuine love, hold the good, show honor, zeal, glow with the Spirit, serve the Lord, rejoice, patient, pray, contribute, be hospitable, bless, live harmoniously, think nobly, live peaceably, feed enemies, provide drink, overcome evil.

That is what the worshipping body of Christ looks like.

The worshipping body of Christ never stops.

It is always giving the Jesus touch.

We touch each other within the body of Christ.

We touch those who live around us who are not part of the body - yet.

We touch those who are currently our enemies.

We care for those who persecute us.

We lift up those who are downtrodden.

We never consider we are too good for someone.

ACTION, ACTION, ACTION, and more ACTION.

But the first two key words, "acts" and "mercy" are actually one word in Greek.

Mercy is expressed two ways, by word and deed.

Mercy is interchangeable with several other words.

Some translations will translate the original word as grace.

Other translations will use the words steadfast love.

Other versions of the Scripture will use the word kindness for mercy.

But it all points toward God's divine activity.

Humanity is at its best when it expresses mercy.

People who show mercy reflect the character of God.

Your finest moments are mercy moments.

Those times when you put the needs of other ahead of your own.

Those moments are true illustrations of salvation.

Mercy is when we come closest to picking up our Cross.

Acts of mercy leave God's imprint on someone else's life.

Mercy exposes the heart of God.

Let's look at some of those verses where God turns Himself inside out for us.

"And the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy each to his brother, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart.' But they refused to hearken, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears that they might not hear. They made their hearts like adamant lest they should hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from the Lord of hosts. 'As I called, and

they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,' says the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 7:8-13)

Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." (Mt. 5:7)  
"He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness (or steadfast love or mercy), and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

Jesus says, "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mt. 9:13)  
"Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:18-19)

Jesus says, "I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath." (Matthew 12:6-8)

"But God's not finished. He's waiting around to be gracious to you. He's gathering strength to show mercy to you. God takes the time to do everything right—everything. Those who wait around for him are the [blessed] ones." (Isaiah 30:18 TM)

"Now do we conclude that God is monstrously unfair? Never! God said long ago to Moses: 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion'. It is obviously not a question of human will or human effort, but of divine mercy." (Romans 9:14-16 Phillips)  
"So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most." (Hebrews 4:16 NLT)

God is ultimately the source of mercy.

God is the giver of mercy.

And mercy is something He requires of us.

God prefers we be merciful more than anything else.

He commands us to be a life of sacrifice.

But sacrifice means nothing if we are not people of mercy.

He calls us to have a hands-on relationship with those around us.

Mercy is not something that is shown from a distance.

Mercy requires us to be up close and personal.

We must make mercy personal.

When we do, God promises something amazing will happen.

People will want to know Him.

They will not be content until they encounter God personally.

They will see God in us and how empty their lives are.

"Many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord of Heaven's Armies and to ask for his blessing. "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: In those days ten men from different nations and languages of the world will clutch at the sleeve of one Jew. And they will say, 'Please let us walk with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" (Zechariah 8:22-23)

Can you see what God pictures?

People are holding on and refusing to release us.

They are desperate and begging.

"I don't know where you are going but please take me with you.

"I don't want to be left behind.

"Please let us go with you.

And they have this desperate grip on us.

It's like we are dragging them around with us.

"We have heard God is with you."

That is the power of mercy.

Acts of mercy with cheerfulness draw others to God.

Mercy is not something to be trifled with.  
The need for mercy does not surface at times of convenience.

**It is often most inconvenient to be merciful.**

It might be in the middle of the night.

It might be in the middle of the game.

It might be in the middle of a dozen other demands.

It might be right after you got all cleaned up.

It is the call to connect at the places of hurt and dirt.

I have to admit that many times I complain over mercy.

**John Murray in his commentary on Romans says, "Oftentimes the work of mercy is disagreeable and so it is liable to be done grudgingly and in a perfunctory way." (The New International Commentary on the New Testament Volume 2 p. 127)**

## **II Paul also saw a church of cheer.**

**Cheer separates common acts of mercy from the gift of mercy.**

Paul speaks of acts of mercy done in cheerfulness.

Tragically I have many moments in life where cheerfulness is absent.

Too many times I go through the day like a sour puss.

I don't even like the definition of sour puss.

**A person having a grouchy disposition that is often accompanied by a scowling facial expression.**

That is one of the gentler definitions.

It only gets worse.

**A person whose facial expression or nature is habitually gloomy or sullen.**

**A person who complains frequently or constantly and looks unhappy.**

And there are lots of synonyms.

**Bear, bellyacher, complainer, crab, crank, croaker, crosspatch, curmudgeon, fusser, griper, grouser, growler, grumbler, grump, murmurer, mutterer, grouch, whiner.**

And if that isn't bad enough try this.

There are a lot of other names for a sour puss.

**Malcontent, sorehead; grinch, killjoy, party pooper, spoilsport; defeatist, pessimist; faultfinder, kicker, nagger, nitpicker, objector, quibbler, repiner; crock [slang], hypochondriac.**

What is a "crock" in this context?

**One that is broken-down, disabled, or impaired, so many old crocks with one foot in the grave – Angus Wilson**

**A complaining medical patient whose illness is largely imaginary or psychosomatic**

You may know people who fit that description, I mean besides me.

That is why the church needs the spiritual gift of mercy.

A mercy-less church will look bleak.

A mercy-less church will taste sour.

A mercy-less church will feel like sand paper.

A mercy-less church will sound hideous.

A mercy-less church will smell like rotting corpse.

Let's see what Paul had in mind for the church in Rome.

**I can show lots of mercy but with an attitude that stinks.**

I might keep that attitude tucked away out of sight.

No one else might be aware of the grouch crouching within.

But God sees my heart.

He knows my heart is not in the act.

He knows I am just going through the motions of mercy out of duty.

What I do might be of genuine help to someone.

It might be a real blessing to them.

**But if I do not experience cheer mercy is not the outflow of God's gift.**

It is simply living up to expectations.

The gift of mercy has everything to do with attitude.

I should not just seek to be merciful.

I should seek and yearn for the gift of mercy.

I want to live a life that is cheerful.

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "God loves a cheerful giver."

(2 Corinthians 9:7)

Paul goes on to reveal God's heart.

"And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:8)

The Greek word Paul uses for cheerfulness is *hilarotes*.

From *hilarotes* we have the English word hilarity.

It literally means to be merry, prompt, and willing.

It means to be attractive and gracious.

*Hilarotes* also implies a sense of anticipation.

To offer mercy is an act done before it is needed.

It isn't waiting until a person falls in the gutter to help them.

It is to love a person too much to let them fall or fail.

The gift of mercy enables us to anticipate calamity and avert it.

The gift of mercy means we are constantly watching and alert.

Let me give you a practical application that anyone can try.

The next time you sit down to a meal do so with mercy on your mind.

Ask yourself, 'how can I anticipate the needs of others around me?'

Does someone have a dinner roll but no butter?

Is someone's beverage glass getting low?

Is a dinner plate getting empty and could perhaps use a second helping?

Is the salt and pepper in front of you and could be passed around?

Anticipating other's needs before they ask is mercy at its purest.

If it works at the dinner table it will work on the street or job.

Mercy means I will never need to say, "If I have to".

God always anticipates you.

Sometimes God waits for us to ask.

He knows when our faith needs to be stretched and used.

But God is always mercy.

There is so little we need to request because of His anticipation.

Closing Song - How Great Are You, Lord

**'May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace.'**

(Numbers 6:24-26)