

## Acts of Love by the mercies of God

### ROMANS 12: 3-13

*3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. 4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your[a] faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,[b] do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. 9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

Before going into the text. How many of you have read the whole book of Romans? How many of you love to read Romans? We all love to read the Gospels, we love to read Acts and then comes Romans, which we mostly tend to skip or fasten our reading by sliding through Romans quickly and then moving on to Corinthians. I've done it multiple times, during my first couple of years in faith. Until one day, when I read Romans 8:28 that became my favorite verse and Romans 8 became my favorite chapter and then Romans became my favorite book.

It wouldn't be an overstatement to say Romans is one of the greatest epistle Paul has written. This is one of the most profound book among all the other epistles and its theology is more deep and intense. Every time you read it, it gets more profound, more precious and tastes better every time. Mostly theologians split Romans into two. Romans (1-11 as Theoretical), Romans (12-16 as Practical theology). Romans 1-11 Paul gives a theoretical view about our sins, punishment for our sins, Graciousness of God, Salvation through Jesus Christ, Justification by faith, sanctification by the Spirit, God's promise to us and to the promised children of Israel. Romans 12-15 is the application of Romans 1:11 as to how to live out your Christian life every moment because of the salvation that you've freely received from God.

We'll see Romans 12 now Paul starts the chapter with "therefore". Therefore I urge you brothers by the mercies of God to live a life of sacrifice, a life of worship, holy and pleasing to

God because you're no longer an unbeliever but now you're a believer, a child of God, you've experienced the saving grace of Christ, that God who is rich in mercy has not punished you for your sins but offered his only son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins and has redeemed us by the precious blood of his son and has given us this free salvation not by our works but by his grace alone, we're justified by faith and sanctified every moment by his Spirit and will be glorified when Christ comes to take us home. Therefore Paul says brothers live a life of sacrifice, be transformed by the Spirit, no longer conforming to the patterns of this world but be renewed in your mind, to test and approve God's good, pleasing and perfect will.

And now comes our text for today and the remaining time we're going to spend on Romans 12: 3-13

Paul gives multiple exhortations here, in these couple of verses, urging us, encouraging us, as to how to live out our Christian life every moment and our fellowship with our fellow believers, our brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. We'll see 5 exhortations from Paul to us individually and collectively as a Church the body of Christ.

First exhortation "Be humble" Vs. 3 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.*

## **1. Be Humble**

It's so beautiful to see that Paul not ordering us in this text to be humble. Paul humbles himself while asking us to be humble. Paul doesn't say I command you in the name of Jesus "be humble". No he says by the grace of God given to me I say to you be humble. He says *do not think yourself more highly than you ought but rather think of yourself with sober judgement in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each one of us.*

How many of us struggle with this sin? I myself want to confess that I had struggled with this sin for a long time. Many of us has become more prideful after being converted to Christ compared to our life before knowing Christ. We call it as spiritual pride, the greatest of all sin and God hates it to the core. We struggle with it because we think we've made it on our own. We think we've become Christians by our own self-righteousness. We think that we produced faith on

our own to believe. When I came into Christ, I used to look down on all my unbelieving friends. I shared Gospel with couple of friends and when they didn't believe, I thought they are not that smart like me or good like me to believe. I always fail to realize that I was one among them for almost 25 years of my life, until Jesus came into my life, opened my eyes not because I was smart, not because I deserve, not because I was good than all my other friends but only by his Sovereign grace.

*Ephesians 2: 4-5, 8-9 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.*

We were dead in transgressions like all our other friends are, but God because of his great love for us who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ not by our works but we're saved by his grace through faith and both are gifts from God so no one may boast. I've memorized these verses, I've written these verses everywhere possible like in mobile, in my office desk, as my laptop wallpaper. Every time as pride arises in me concerning my salvation, this verse would rise up by the power of the Spirit inside me and devours me like a lion and beats it to death, every ounce of Pride that arises concerning my salvation. Now by God's grace, I think, last couple of years God has helped me to overcome this sin that I so struggled with.

But there is another pride that I still suffer this is not against my unbelieving friends but this is towards my fellow believer friends, thinking I'm a better Christian than most of them. As days grows by in our Christian life, we tend to forget the grace of God that we received and turn into a legalist, like one of those Pharisees. Thinking we're a far better than other fellow Christians in our knowledge about God (Kind of knowledge that puffs up), in holiness (I don't sin, I keep all the laws of God), in tithing, in gifts (I have the gift of Prophecy, I speak in tongues), in our ministry (I've brought so many people to faith knowing that it is not us but God himself has saved them. Many has pride over pastoring a big church, Many pride over having many members in their church) in our humility (How many of us have thought we're most humble than other believers? That itself is a greatest pride)

I never pray so much for any other thing every day than I pray for this sin that I still struggle with. We should know everything we're today is by the grace.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:10 *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.*

Paul says everything that I am is by his grace. Not only our salvation that we've received is by grace, but every moment of our Christian life that we live is by his grace. By his grace we sustained in faith, by his grace we're turned righteous and do not sin, by his grace we breath, by his grace we give, by his grace we do his ministry, by his grace we'll finish this race, by his grace we'll go home, by his grace we'll be with him forever. Amen

Second exhortation from Paul to us is to have unity in the body of Christ and in service to one another.

*Vs 4-5 4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

## **2. To have unity in the body of Christ and serve each other**

This is a beautiful analogy by Paul. Paul comparing the human physical structure to the structure of the church. Jesus being the head of the church, the head of the body and we are the members of his body. Jesus the head wanted the members of his body to be in unity. Paul goes on to say not all members have same function. Eyes are to see, ears are to hear, nose is to smell, mouth is to speak, hands are to lift things, legs are to walk. Each member of the body has a different function. Moreover not one part of the body is useless but every part has its own function without which the body would become handicapped. We see that in 1 Corinthians 12: 21-26 Each member has a role to play in the body but that member alone cannot do everything and cannot say I alone form the whole body rather they need other members of the body to perform their role in unity with one another, then the body is fully effective and whole.

Now Paul links this with the gifts that God is given to each one of us for the edification of the church and for a common good. When we say gifts, we shouldn't restricting ourselves to the 9 gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, yes those are gifts God gives but there are also many other

gifts God has given. For example in this text Paul has mentioned 7 gifts, gift of prophesy, gift of serving, gift of teaching, gift of encouragement, gift of giving, gift of leading, gift of mercy. Paul says as all these gifts are given to each one of you by the grace of God, freely you have received, freely you give. Offer it freely to one another for the edification of the church and for a common good.

Third exhortation Love one another genuinely. Vs 9-10 *9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

### **3. Love one another**

The word Love is the most used and abused word in today's culture. No one knows what true love is except the believers of Christ. For we have received it abundantly. For God so loved us that he gave his one and only son as a ransom for us. For he has lavishly poured out his love for us. For we taste it, feel it, enjoy it and treasure it every moment. So no one knows what true love is except the believers of Jesus. But all of us who has received it in abundance struggle to show love to our fellow brothers and sisters. Many of us who say I love God but I hate God's people. Bible says that they truly don't love God.

*1 John 4: 20-21 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot[a] love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

This is command from God that whoever loves God must also loves God's people too. The more you love God the more you love God's people. Our love for God overflows and reaches out to his people.

And let your love be genuine, don't try to fake it. It dishonors God. People at times might not find out and think it's real but God who examines our heart knows it, whether we're genuinely love one another or we're trying to make it up.

Now there is another kind of people in Christendom, this is another extreme people who always wanted to love people no matter what they do. They wouldn't confront his brothers and sisters even if they do anything wrong but would still love them in a way they acknowledge

what they do. That's wrong. Vs 9 says *9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

1 Corinthians 12: 6 *Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.*

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. We as Christians should primarily hold onto God's truth and never compromise on God's truth for loving one another. Today this is a biggest issue in our churches. Many pastors/leaders are not willing to confront his people and their sinful life but rather wanted to please his church people, doesn't wanted to hurt anyone, doesn't wanted them to leave the church, so they try to ignore their sinful life and continue to show love to them. Which means you acknowledge or give approval to what they do. Same way today many pastors/leaders of the church live a sinful life or live contrary to his commands and the members of the church doesn't want to confront his/her pastor or elder rather try to ignore and show love to them, which means they acknowledge or give approval to what they do. This is killing our church today.

You being a parent, if your child does something wrong and you don't want to beat or say something that would hurt your child, then the child would think whatever he/she has done is right.

So we as believers of Christ should know when to show love and when to be tough. Jesus showed love and compassion when needed and he was also tough when needed.

Vs 11 says *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*

We should be always zealous for God in serving him and never lose our zeal for God by trying to compromise God's truth for the sake of love.

We should know to speak the truth in love.

Fourth exhortation from Paul to us is to share with one another Vs 13a *Share with the Lord's people who are in need.*

#### **4. Share with one another**

Paul says share with Lord's people who are in need. Other version says share with the saints of God who are in need.

Fellowship is all about sharing. We see it with Jesus. Jesus shared all with his disciples. He never kept anything to himself but he shared his food, money, time, ministry, blessings with his disciples. We see that in the first century church, his disciples doing the same. There was no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who had lands or houses sold their property brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostle's feet and it was distributed to anyone who had need. So we see Jesus doing it, we see first century believers doing it.

Acts 4: 32-35

*32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.*

We see it even today. I myself is a testimony to that, I'm a recipient of such rich generosity from my brothers and sisters in this local church. Me and my wife we've been greatly blessed by many brothers and sisters in this local church who has sacrificially shared their time, resources, words of encouragement, money, food, shelter etc.. When we were in the deepest needs of our life. God has been so good to us in allowing few brothers and sisters in our life who stood with us and shared with us our sorrows, our needs, our joys, our pains. So sharing among believers has not stopped with the first century church, it continues even today and it's our greatest testimony as Christians in this fallen world which hates sharing. And my desire and prayer is to us as a church would exceed in this deed of giving and sharing in a much greater way like never before by the grace of God. All of us would become a joyful sharers of all God's blessings to all the other saints who are in need in this local church and in Christ's universal church. Go and be with people who are hurting, who are in need, spend time with them, talk to them, and pray with them. If you know any widows or someone who has lost their near ones, go and just be with them, share their sorrow. Vs 15 says 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Weep with those who weep. Be there Bangalore south church. Be there to weep. Be there to rejoice. Be there to share.

Fifth exhortation Vs. 13b. Practice hospitality

## **5. Show hospitality**

Hospitality is not just inviting people once in a year at the time of Christmas, at the time of your birthday. Practicing hospitality is a continuous act. Keep your doors open, means be ready to welcome people for all those who are in need. Keep it open for traveling saints. Keep it open for traveling pastors. Do it without grumbling (1 Peter 4: 9). Do it constantly. Would like to share a testimony of one of the loveliest couple who is known for their hospitality, with that I would like to finish this message. Jonathan Edwards and Sarah Edwards. They lived in US during 1700's. Jonathan Edwards as you all is one of the greatest minds the world has ever seen. He is one of the greatest preacher in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. God used him mightily during the first great awakening in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He is married to Sarah Edwards and they had eleven children. Their life and testimony is so beautiful. I would recommend each one of you to read their biography. The point I wanted to convey today is about their hospitality. They lived in the country side and their house was always open. They had eleven children to raise and at the same they would always minimum 10-15 people living in their house every time. People who come new to the town, traveling preachers, homeless people. Sarah Edwards would alone take care of the children, cooking food for all, taking care of the poultry, taking care of the house. Not only that many servants of God has given testimony that their stay in Edwards house has been a great blessing to them spiritually. Many who were in the verge of leaving their faith, many who were thinking of quitting ministry, many who were disheartened, even as they stayed in Edwards house, has been greatly encouraged, greatly blessed and has gone back spiritually charged. One specific person I would like to highlight David Brainerd one of the young missionary who was rejected to continue in missions due to his ill health as he was suffering from TB. He was welcomed in Edwards's house, he stayed in Edwards's house during the last days of his life. He was taken care by one of Edward's daughter Jerusha Edwards. During the time of his stay. Jonathan Edwards's daughter got TB. Brainerd died in Edwards's house and in couple of months Edwards's daughter died out to TB.

Showing hospitality even if it costs you a lot, that's true hospitality.



Jesus says in Matthew 25: 40 *whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'*

So let us try to be always hospitable to one another by doing to others we have done it to Jesus himself.