

# The Gospel Applied: A Church Shaped by the Gospel

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[ 0 : 00 ] 12.1. Okay, that's in page 1139. Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer you a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your spiritual act of worship. Do not comfort any longer to the partner of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, and perfect will. For by the grace given me, I say to every one of you, do not think of yourself more highly than you would, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith in God has given you, just like each of you has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function.

So in Christ, we who are many from one body, and each member belongs to all the others, we have different gifts according to the grace given us.

If a man's gift is protected, let him use in the proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve.

[ 1 : 39 ] If it is teaching, let him teach. If it is encouraging, let him encourage. If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously.

If it is leadership, let him govern diligently. If it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Thank you. Thanks very much, Alveda, for reading.

So we start into a new series. The Gospel Applied is the title for the whole series, which will take us through from Romans 12 through to 16.

And this morning we look at a church that is shaped by the gospel, and in particular, how a church is shaped by God's mercy.

So let's pray and let us ask for God's help as we look at this together. Father, we ask that you would pour out your mercy upon us even now.

[ 3 : 01 ] In your goodness and in your kindness, would you help us to concentrate with our minds that we may hear clearly what your word is saying to us.

And we pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit, it would change our hearts, it would change our lives on the inside, and that it would shape us into being the kind of people and the kind of church that you call us to be.

We pray that through our time this morning and through our hearing of your word, that we would leave this morning amazed, thrilled, encouraged by what you have done.

And may it motivate us to live lives of service for you. So we ask for your help to us all.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. If you were to choose a theme song for the church, what would it be?

[ 4 : 23 ] I asked Kirsty this during the week. She said, who let the dogs out? Don't think that was the right answer. What song would you choose? Theme songs are important because they shape and define who we are.

They create pride. They stir up passion within us. So when Ireland play their rugby matches or their soccer matches, the crowd in unison, the stadium will all stand together and they will sing That's as far as my Irish goes.

Soldiers are we whose lives are pledged to Ireland. And as the song goes on, in Aaron's cause come woe or weal, mid cannons roar and rifles peal, will chant a soldier's song.

Now when we hear a song like that in unison with everybody together, it puts fire in your belly.

They're songs that define our cause and they shape the kind of people that we are.

So what is the theme song of the church? Well in Romans 12, we start into a new section and it's all about the church.

[ 5 : 51 ] It's all about the gospel being applied to the church. But before we see what the church should be like, we've got to know what our theme song is.

Because this song defines our cause and it will shape the kind of people we will be. It's a song that will stir up passion to pledge ourselves to the gospel.

It's a song that will motivate us to give ourselves in sacrifice to God and in service to others. So what is the song that we are to sing?

We'll look at chapter 12, verse 1. Therefore, I urge you, I beg of you, I plead with you, my people, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy.

So our theme song is to be a song about mercy. Together we are called in verse 1 as a church to come together to look back and remember God's amazing kindness towards us.

[ 7 : 08 ] We are to stand and view the beauty and brilliance of God's mercy to people like you and me. For 11 chapters, he's been telling us all about God's mercy.

And it all comes to a climax in chapters 9 through to 11. So go back to chapter 9. He's talking here about the salvation that we have received, the new life in Christ that we have.

So in chapter 9, verse 15, this is what it says. For he, that's God, says to Moses, and it applies to us, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

It does not, that means our salvation, does not therefore depend on man's desire or effort. It doesn't depend on anything we do, but on God's mercy.

God in his compassion has looked down on people like you and me who fail and fall all the time, who deserve God's just judgment, but yet when he looks upon us, he responds in mercy.

[ 8 : 33 ] I read an article recently in the newspaper about a public hanging in Iran. The headline went like this, Woman Spares Son's Killer from Hanging.

A young man had murdered a mother's 18-year-old son, and the law in that country states that as an act of justice, the victim, in this case the mother, can kick the chair away on which the criminal is standing to cause his death.

So with this huge crowd of people watching, the mother climbed the steps, and instead of kicking the chair away, she removed the noose from around the man's neck, and she forgave him.

It was an incredible act of mercy. Now we are told to look back and view God's mercy.

We are to picture in our minds not a gallows, but a cross. And there we are to see the Lord Jesus Christ who takes the nails for you and for me.

[ 9 : 51 ] Because it's us who are guilty. It's us who deserve to die. But in an incredible act of mercy, it's as if God takes the noose from around our neck and he places it around his own son, the God-man Jesus Christ.

So Jesus is the one who dies in our place. Jesus is the one who takes my sin on himself. He takes the judgment that is mine.

The wrath of God falls on him. That is mercy. But that's not all. Imagine with me, if you would, that the woman in that illustration not only spared the criminal from death, but imagine now that she takes that man, that murderer, and she takes him into her home.

That she adopts him into her family. That she gives him his own room and provides for him, giving him food and shelter and care and protection.

She now treats this criminal as she loved her own son who had died. Imagine. Well, the woman never did that.

[ 11 : 20 ] But that is exactly what God has done for us. Look in chapter 9, verse 25. Again, this is talking about the big picture of God's mercy.

Romans 9, verse 25. As God says in Hosea, I will call them my people who are not my people.

And I will call her my loved one who is not my loved one. And it will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, you are not my people, they will be called sons of the living God.

That's the beauty and the brilliance of God's mercy. This is the compassion and goodness of God's kindness towards people like you and me.

He forgives us. But not only does he forgive us, but he now welcomes us in. He takes us as people who weren't in his family and he says, now you are in my family.

[ 12 : 23 ] You are my loved ones. You are my people. You are my children. And so this is our theme song. This is the song that is always to be playing in the background of our lives.

Never tire from looking back to the cross. As we sang earlier, beneath the cross of Jesus, this is where we are to stand and to see unending mercy flow to us.

never tire of looking back to Christ and seeing how you are eternally loved and treasured.

That you have become brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus and that you by faith belong to the family of God. So this is our theme song.

A song of mercy. Now as we remember God's mercy, we will see that it begins to shape us and define who we are as a church.

[ 13 : 35 ] So look at chapter 12 verse 1. Therefore, I urge you brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices.

Verse 6. We have been given different gifts according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

If it is serving, let him serve. In other words, what he's saying to us here, because of everything God has done for us, in view of God's mercy, this is how you are to live.

You have been filled with God's mercy and now because you have been filled, your lives will overflow in sacrifice and in service.

Now, before we look at these things in detail, let's get this right. We do these things, we sacrifice and we serve, not to earn God's mercy, but because we have already received his mercy.

[ 14 : 42 ] Our sacrifice and our service is not a duty to perform to try and get God's attention or to earn his favour. It's an expression of our love and a way to say, thank you, thank you, Father, for your amazing mercy to me.

So, we are to be a church that is shaped and driven by mercy. mercy. First, a church shaped by mercy will mean we offer ourselves in sacrifice to God.

A church that is shaped by mercy will mean we offer ourselves in sacrifice to God. Let's read verse 1 again. Therefore, I urge you, I plead with you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your spiritual act of worship. Offer your body as a living sacrifice. Well, what does that mean?

What does that look like? Well, go back to chapter 6. Go back to chapter 6, verse 13. Here in chapter 6, he's been talking about all that Christ has done for us, how we are united with him in his death and resurrection and the new life that we have, and in response to that, look at what we do, verse 13.

[ 16 : 22 ] Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

Because of God's mercy in our lives, we have been brought from death into life. life. And so in response, in celebration of this new life that we have been given, we now give our bodies to God, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually.

In other words, we give our whole self to God. We hold nothing back. It is total and it is complete. complete. Go back to chapter 12.

Do you see what it says in chapter 12, verse 1? Offer your bodies as living sacrifices. We are not dead people, we are living, it requires action, holy and pleasing to God.

To be holy, to be a holy person is not to kind of wander around with some kind of flowing robe and do all kinds of funny chants. Holy means to be set apart.

[ 17 : 51 ] It means to give yourselves exclusively to God. Here I am. I am an instrument in your hands for you to use as you would choose.

This, verse 1, is your spiritual act of worship. worship. This is the right kind of response to God.

This is how we worship God in response to his mercy. We give ourselves to him. We worship him.

Worship is not singing songs for 20 minutes.

It includes singing, and it's good to sing, and that's why we sing, but true worship is about giving your whole life, 24-7, to God.

Worship really starts when we head out that door and we go to work tomorrow morning, or we study for our exams, or we care for our children.

[ 18 : 53 ] This is where we live in response to God's mercy. It's living for God exclusively in the context of our day-to-day lives. Now, if you're anything like me, you'll find that really, really hard.

It's hard to give ourselves in sacrifice, because the message that we get blaring in our ears every day is, look after self, don't sacrifice.

Look after yourself, you're number one. Every day there's a battle inside of us about every decision and every choice that we make. It's all about self, not sacrifice.

Live for yourself, don't live for God. That's the battle inside of us. So how can we overcome this battle? Well, look at verse 2. He says, do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

you see, the pattern of this world is to live for self. The voice of this world is saying to us every single day, live for yourself.

[ 20 : 14 ] Rather, he is saying, let the voice of God, let that begin to transform and shape your mind. In other words, I think it's coming back to the beginning of verse 1.

it's about singing the song of mercy to each other. It's reminding ourselves of God's mercy and letting that transform and renew your mind.

It's looking back to view it and see how God gave his life to sacrifice his life for you, who held nothing back but gave his all for you so that you could have life.

And when we look at that mercy, let it shape you, let it change you, let it get deep inside of your life so that in the heat of the battle when you're questioning about will it be self or will it be sacrifice, you will be amazed at the mercy of God and in response you will sacrifice your life for him.

So as a church that is shaped by mercy, we will offer ourselves in sacrifice to God. second, a church shaped by mercy means we will be offering ourselves in service to others, we will offer ourselves in service to others.

[ 21 : 36 ] Look at verse 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, others.

Now this is the beginning of a section which is all about a call to serve others and how we serve others will all depend how we think of ourselves.

So how do you think about yourself? What's your opinion of yourself? If you have too high of you, if you think too highly of yourself, you will think that everybody is there to serve you.

if you have too low a view of yourself, you will think, well I'm not good enough to serve anybody. If I'm too high of you, everybody should serve me.

If I have too low a view of myself, then I'm not able to serve anyone. But look what it says in verse 3. He says we are to think of ourselves with sober judgment.

[ 22 : 48 ] judgment. We don't have too high a view and we don't have too low of you. In fact, we are to think of ourselves as God sees us and as God treats us.

Look at the rest of verse 3. He says, think of yourself with sober judgment. Here's the phrase, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

So the measure of faith that has been given to us is not in terms of quantity, but quality. The faith that he has given to us is not quantity, but it's quality.

It's not that some people have been given a greater measure, that we have more faith than other people. No, it means we've been given the same kind of faith, the same measure, the same standard of faith, the faith that God has given to you, is the same faith that's given to me, it's the same standard.

In other words, it's coming back again to God's mercy. God in his mercy has given us the gift of faith which we can't earn and we don't deserve, and the only reason that I am who I am, that I am a child of God, is because of God's mercy.

[ 24 : 06 ] So I now look at myself through the eyes of God, I look at myself through mercy. And that changes everything. So I no longer see myself as superior to other people, I no longer think of myself as inferior to anybody else, in fact, because of God's mercy to me in my life, I will see myself as a valued, treasured member of God's church, his family.

Look at verse 4. just as each of us has one body, so I was talking about the physical body, with many members, so we've got head, arms, legs, eyes, ears, nose, and all those sorts of things, even though we've got many members, these members do not all have the same function, so our head doesn't do what our hands do, and our hands don't do what our legs do.

Okay, they've all got different parts. Now, verse 5, so in Christ, we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

There's no inferiority, there's no superiority, nobody in the church family should be saying, you should serve me, or no one should be saying, I can't serve you.

We are all by God's mercy, valued, and treasured people, we are all vital parts of the body. We belong to Christ, we belong to the church.

[ 25 : 46 ] Now, while we all have the same gift of faith, and while God has treated us in exactly the same way by mercy, we have all been given different gifts to serve.

So, look at verse 6. Look at verse 6, we have different gifts, gifts, according to the grace given us. God has given to us, each one of us, a different kind of gift.

So, in verses 7 to 8, we've got this example of the kinds of gifts that there are, whether it's prophesying, whether it's serving, whether it's teaching, whether it's encouraging, whether it's contributing, whether it's giving generously, whether it's leadership, whether it's showing mercy. This isn't a complete list. Rather, it's saying these are the kinds of gifts that he gives to his people within the body of the church. And the point is, they're all different.

None of us all have the same kinds of gifts in the same kind of way. So, that means we need each other.

[ 26 : 58 ] that means the church family can't operate, the church can't function without each other. Look what it says at the end of verse five.

Each member, each person belongs to all the others. I belong to you and you belong to me and we all belong to each other. So, if I decide and wake up one morning, I don't think I'll serve today, I don't feel like it.

It's actually not just affecting me, it's affecting everyone because we belong to everyone. So, we've been given gifts through God's mercy to us so that we can begin to serve and give to one another. Now, again, as we look at that, that's really hard because there's days, in fact, for me, it's most days where I don't really want to serve.

I wish everybody would serve me. Do you want to get out of bed in the mornings? Who likes getting out of bed? What John does.

[ 28 : 12 ] I don't like getting out of bed. I'd love if everybody would just come and serve me. Now, if we all thought like that, what kind of church would we be?

A church of self-service rather than serving others. So, what do we do when we just don't feel like serving? When we don't feel like getting up or we don't feel like going to something or doing something?

What am I going to do in that moment? Well, we need to go back to verse one. We need to go back to our song. Look at it, verse 12, or chapter 12, verse 1, therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, look back and view the mercy of God.

See how the creator God came to serve you and give his life for you. He came to serve, not to be served. So, when I don't feel like serving, I need to sing the song of mercy.

I need to let it shape my heart. I need to let it grab me and take a hold of me and let me see all that Christ has done and I will serve in love in response to that.

[ 29 : 31 ] I have an issue not just about getting out of bed but about putting petrol in my car. Even when the little orange light comes on and it's telling me that it's way down into the red, I just have this notion that I can keep on driving without putting more petrol in.

And on more than one occasion I've been caught out. And the simple lesson is this, without petrol the car doesn't work. In fact, it will damage the car.

Now, none of us can live a life of sacrifice and service on empty. mercy. We can't serve, we can't give, we can't function as we are meant to function on empty.

In other words, we need to be filled up each day with the mercy of God, in view of God's mercy.

Look at the beauty of Christ every day who sacrificed his life for you and for me.

Look at the brilliance of Christ who came to serve you and me and who continues to serve us every day. And together as we sing this song of mercy to our hearts, we'll be changed, changed on the inside because the message of the gospel is this, not that you must sacrifice more or that you must serve better.

[ 31 : 03 ] The message of the gospel is simply God's mercy. God's mercy. Not do better, not do more, and then when we are filled with God's mercy, so our lives will overflow in sacrifice and service to God.

Let's pray together. Our Father God, we thank you so much for your incredible mercy to us.

We pray that you would fill our lives afresh with its wonder and with its beauty and that it would motivate us again to be people who live lives of service, not thinking about what we have to do to get your favour, not thinking about what we have to do to earn your love, but simply seeing how we are loved and looking at what you have done for us and in response living for you.  
So Father, we thank you for your amazing mercy to us. In Jesus' name, Amen.