

Gratitude: Mirror Metaphor: Spiritual Gifts: Helps, Showing Mercy, Exodus 33:19b

Recognizing that testings of the *Jornada* exist and are debilitating, the Holy Spirit assigns the gift of helps to a number of believers in each congregation. This spiritual gift may function on behalf of the believer as well as the unbeliever. Its application is left up to the one who has the gift and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

The major difference between the gift of service and the gift of helps is that the former functions only inside the local church while the latter can function both inside and outside the local church. This is a very important gift in the local church and many have it. It has the ability to discern legitimate need, it has the motivation to administer appropriate assistance where needed, and it has the discernment to recognize when a person is simply involved in approbation lust, power lust, or hypocrisy. This is a very important gift in the life of a local church since it is the means by which the hand of Christian charity is extended to those in need on behalf of the entire congregation.

C. Showing Mercy

This gift is mentioned in Romans 12:8 by the word *eleeo* and is translated “*showing mercy*.” In order to get a grasp of the function of this gift we need to first of all take a look at God’s expression of mercy.

We will select for our central passages Romans 9:15 which is a quote from Exodus 33:19.

Romans 9:15 - For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I show mercy and I will have compassion on whomever I show compassion.”

Exodus 33:19 - “... I have been gracious on whom I will be gracious and I have had mercy on whom I will have mercy.”

The background for the Exodus passage is Operation Golden Calf. While Moses was on Sinai receiving the revelation of the Law, Aaron was leading the people in an idolatrous *ménage à trois* with one of the chief gods of Egypt. The Lord had threatened to abandon the Israelites in the *Jornada* as a result and was prepared to appoint an angel to guide them the rest of the way to Canaan. But Moses interceded for them before the Lord and negotiated a new contract. It required an open show of repentance by the Israelites after which the Lord would resume his leadership and guidance in the *Jornada*.

A part of the Lord’s explanation to Moses as to why he was willing to reestablish a relationship with the Jewish nation is found in Exodus 33:19. The exegesis of this verse is revealing and needs a few minutes of attention.

Exodus 33:19b (NAS) - ... I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.

This passage is going to reveal to us several things:

- a. We will see the integrity of God revealed in his righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, and longsuffering.
- b. We will learn that His integrity granted mercy to the Israelites in eternity past which was fulfilled in history.
- c. Further, we will learn that the showing of mercy by God to the Israelites is a demonstration of how we are to show mercy to others in the Church Age.
- d. Finally, there is a spiritual gift which enables some to specialize in this activity.

The statement begins with the qal perfect of the verb *chanan*: “*I have been gracious.*” The qal perfect means that God was always gracious to the Israelites. This emphasizes His grace policy towards them with emphasis on logistical grace support.

We have recently learned that in order for God to lead a rebellious people out of soul slavery into the leadership role of a Client Nation requires that their bodies be sustained even when they are involved in acts of rebellion. Thus, logistical grace is guaranteed and demonstrates God’s longsuffering towards His children who are in rebellion.

Again, the word “*gracious*” is the qal perfect of *chanan* and is best translated, “*I have been gracious.*” This places emphasis on the divine decrees. In eternity past God decreed from His integrity that He would be gracious to the Israelites. This decision was placed in the ROM chip of the divine decrees and became a statement of His unalterable sovereign will. This use of the qal indicates a completed action and reveals that when God fed this decision into the decrees it had the effect of guaranteeing logistical grace support in time.

The next use of the verb is different. It is the qal imperfect of *chanan* which is best translated, “*on whom I will be gracious.*” This use shows the historical fulfillment of that which has already been decreed and thus may be classified as a printout from the computer of divine decrees. In other words, when God decreed His grace to the Israelites, that grace was a completed act and thus its historical fulfillment is guaranteed.

“I have been gracious in eternity past on those to whom I will be gracious in time.”

This is followed by the piel perfect of the verb *racham* which is best translated, “*and I have had mercy.*” This act of mercy is inserted into the divine decrees in eternity past and is an expression of divine compassion towards the Israelites. It is followed by the piel imperfect of the same verb and is translated, “*on whom I will have mercy.*” To those towards whom God decreed to have mercy in eternity past He will have mercy in time.

Exodus 33:19b - *I have been gracious* [qal perfect of *chanan* for a completed action in eternity past] *on whom I will be gracious* [qal imperfect of *chanan* for the historical printout of grace] *and I have had mercy* [piel perfect of *racham* for a completed action in eternity past] *on whom I will have mercy* [piel imperfect of *racham* for the historical printout of mercy].