

Romans 12:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Analysis

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Paul concludes his gift list with four more examples. **He that exhorteth** (ὁ παρακαλῶν, ho parakalōn) refers to those who encourage, comfort, and urge believers toward faithfulness—the word paraklēsis combines encouragement and exhortation. Next, **he that giveth** (ὁ μεταδιδούς, ho metadidous) describes generous financial supporters who share their resources. This should be done **with simplicity** (ἐν ἀπλότητι, en haplotēti)—single-mindedness, sincerity, without ulterior motives or desire for recognition. Jesus warned against giving to be seen by others (Matthew 6:2-4).

He that ruleth (ὁ προϊστάμενος, ho proistamenos) means those who lead or manage—elders, deacons, or patrons who oversee the church's affairs. This requires **diligence** (σπουδή, spoudē), earnest care and attentiveness. Finally, **he that sheweth mercy** (ὁ ἐλεῶν, ho eleōn) describes those who care for the suffering, sick, or marginalized. Mercy ministry must be done **with cheerfulness** (ἐν ἰλαρότητι, en hilarotēti)—the root of our word 'hilarity'—joyful compassion, not grudging duty. Each gift requires its appropriate virtue: generosity needs purity of motive, leadership needs diligence, mercy needs cheerfulness.

Historical Context

Roman society operated on patron-client relationships, where wealthy benefactors supported clients in exchange for honor and political loyalty. Paul transforms this dynamic: Christian giving should be without expectation of return ('simplicity'). Leadership in the church wasn't based on social status but spiritual maturity and calling. Mercy ministry addressed the empire's vulnerable populations—widows, orphans, slaves, the sick—whom pagan society often neglected. Jewish synagogues had structured charity; Paul calls Christians to exceed this with cheerful, Spirit-empowered compassion.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. When you give financially to God's work, is it 'with simplicity'—no strings attached, no desire for recognition or control?
2. If you're in leadership (in church, family, or workplace), are you leading 'with diligence'—careful, attentive, accountable?
3. How can you grow in showing mercy 'with cheerfulness' rather than viewing compassion as a burdensome obligation?

Interlinear Text

εἴτε	ό	παρακαλῶν	ἐν	τῇ	παρακλήσει.	ό
Or	G3588	he that exhorteth	let him do it with	G3588	exhortation	G3588
G1535		G3870	G1722		G3874	
μεταδιδοὺς	ἐν	ἀπλότητι	ό	προϊστάμενος		
he that giveth	let him do it with	simplicity	G3588	he that ruleth		
G3330	G1722	G572		G4291		
ἐν	σπουδῇ	ό	ἐλεῶν	ἐν		
let him do it with	diligence	G3588	he that sheweth mercy	let him do it with		
G1722	G4710		G1653	G1722		
ἰλαρότητι						
cheerfulness						
G2432						

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 9:7 (Parallel theme): Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

1 Timothy 5:17 (Parallel theme): Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

1 Corinthians 12:28 (Parallel theme): And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Hebrews 13:17 (Parallel theme): Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Hebrews 10:25 (Parallel theme): Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Acts 13:15 (Parallel theme): And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

Acts 15:32 (Parallel theme): And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

1 Corinthians 14:3 (Parallel theme): But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

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