

## Romans 12:3-8 Spiritual Gifts

As we continue on with Romans chapter 12, Paul is giving the church more practical advice for how the church should function in Rome. Last week, Paul urged all the church to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, live holy lives, not to conform to the pattern of sexual immorality around them and to be transformed by the renewing of their minds by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the duty of every believer. Now in this section of scripture, Paul is more specific. God's will for each believer is different, although we are all part of one church. God uses different gifts through different people to further his kingdom.

V3-5 Paul is reminded of the grace that he has been shown. When Paul is writing to Timothy, he refers to himself as the 'worst of sinners',

"But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the **worst of sinners**, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life." 1 Timothy 1:16

Yet, on account of everything Paul had done as a persecutor of Christians, God by his grace and mercy had forgiven Paul and used him mightily in ministry. Paul's gifting was as an apostle.

"Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake." Romans 1:5

Paul humbly serves Jesus as an apostle, offering his whole self as a 'living, holy sacrifice, pleasing to the Lord' on a daily basis. He spent his life doing this using his gifting. Having had his mind renewed and been transformed by the Holy Spirit, Paul no longer thinks highly of himself, but humbles himself in obedient service to Jesus Christ his Savior.

On account of God's mercy to us and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, our lives are to be 'living sacrifices for him'. As we mentioned last week, Jesus expects us to do this daily.

"Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." Luke 9:23

Paul lived like this, his whole focus in life was Jesus Christ. He used his gifting as an Apostle to worship Jesus Christ.

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21

As believers, this should be our attitude. This comes through service to him through our various giftings that God has given us by his grace. This is to be done on a daily basis. As Christians, by the power of the Holy Spirit and renewing of our mind through the word of God, we are to serve Jesus Christ and his church by the gifts he has given us. In doing this, we are daily 'living

sacrifices', living 'holy' lives and being 'pleasing to God'. This is our 'spiritual act of worship' (12:1).

### Do you know what your spiritual gift is to serve the church?

"Devotion to the Lord and active, faithful ministry for him are inseparable. We cannot be truly sacrificed to him and be inactive in his work. And, on the other hand, we cannot be truly successful in his work without being genuinely devoted to him. Service to God brings honor to him and blessing for us only when it is the outflow of our worship in offering ourselves as living sacrifices." MacArthur, *Romans*

This was clearly the view of the early church as well. James the Lord's brother, who was the leader in the church at Jerusalem says,

"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? <sup>15</sup> Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup> If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? <sup>17</sup> In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." James 2:14-17

**There is a clear expectation, from both Jesus and the early church that we should spend our lives for God and be sacrificially serving him daily. We do this through the gifts that he has given us.**

This is a challenge for some of us. Just to clarify, that we don't do works for salvation because we are saved by faith alone in Jesus Christ. Rather we serve the Lord Jesus with our gifts daily on account of salvation and out of love for what he did for us on the cross at Calvary.

### Are you using your gift for the church that God has given you? If not why not? What is stopping you?

As Christians, we are all part of the body of Christ which is the church. Paul uses the example of a body with different members to represent the church (c.f. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Ephesians 4:1-16). There are many parts of the body that work together to make the body productive. However, all parts of the body follow the direction of the brain. With regards to the church, there are many different parts of the church but as Christians we are to work together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ who is the head of the body. There is much diversity in the different members of the body and there is much diversity in the different gifts. As Christians, we are united as a body under Christ. It is wrong to view ourselves as individuals who work in isolation. We should be working together with our gifts as one organism. We need each other and belong to one another. Our gifts are to be used collectively for the good of the body which is the church.

‘Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment.’ Our service to the Lord is not to be done with a haughty, prideful attitude but we are to look at ourselves with a sober mindset. We are to understand our own position within the church, that is as an active member of the church under the headship of Christ. We are not to think of ourselves as more important than others but recognize that our gifting is to bless the church. God’s gifts to the church are to be instruments of service and not instruments of competition.

“Spiritual gifts are tools to build with, not toys to play with or weapons to fight with” Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*

As believers we should not be jealous of another’s gifts or position. This comes from a prideful attitude. It does not build up the church but rather hinders the growth of the Kingdom.

Deacon elder example from Banchory.

**Do you think of yourself more highly than you ought? Are you jealous of another’s gift?**

V6-8 With regards to the gifts that Paul mentions in v6-8 God gives gifts by the power of the Holy Spirit to every single believer (member of the body); there is no believer that is left out. Each Christian has at least one gift which is for the building up of the church. God gives us these gifts by his grace. The gifts he gives us, are to be used constantly. When God gives us a gift he also gives us the strength and ability to use that gift. All gifts and abilities come from God and not everybody has the same gift. Some have more than one gift and that’s ok! It is up to God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to distribute the gifts as he sees fit for his purposes. God can also give a gift for a particular season of ministry. It is important for us to recognize our own gifting and be satisfied in that area of gifting.

Example of children’s ministry and encourager

“Bill,

Wow! Thank you so much for taking time to share such a timely word of encouragement. It means the world to me to hear this and I’m so very grateful for how God is using you. Thank you for your faithfulness. Thanks again for your friendship and partnership”

We are allowed to enjoy the gifts that God has given us. It would be wrong for us to covet someone else’s gift when we are not gifted in that area. That is why we are to look at ourselves with ‘sober judgment’. Recognize what God has gifted you in, enjoy the gift he has given you and use it for his Kingdom and glory on an ongoing basis.

**What is your gift and how are you using it?**

It is vital for us to use God’s gifts for his ministry and not hide it. If we are not using our gifts then the church will be stunted in growth. Every one of us, as a believer has something to offer

our king in service to him. Spiritual gifts then, are to be used to encourage and mature believers for effective ministry.

The list of gifts that Paul is giving here is not exhaustive, there are other gifts that are mentioned in other letters (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-29, Ephesians 4 etc.). Some scholars would say that there are 16 spiritual gifts others would say that there are 19 but I don't think that is the point that Paul is making in this passage. Paul never gives an exhaustive list of gifts in any one passage of scripture. Thielman puts it like this in his commentary,

“Paul's emphasis lies on the humility and sincere inner conviction with which believers should fulfill the role within the church that God has assigned to them.” Thielman, *ECNT Romans*

We are to use our gifts and use them in the proper way. Lack of use of a gift or abuse of a gift only results in the hinderance of the gospel and the advancement of the kingdom.

I do want to clarify the gift of prophesy. Prophesy in the New Testament is different from the Old Testament. Prophesy in the Old Testament was predictive and concerning God's plan for the future. Prophesy in the New Testament today would have the sense of 'communicating revealed truth in a manner that convicts and builds up its hearers'.

### Example of Efree church

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Colossians 3:17

“<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, <sup>24</sup> since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Colossians 3:23-24.

We need to serve using our gifts not as a one off, but as a living sacrifice to give God the glory. I want to encourage you today, to use your gift that God has given you and enjoy it. The church will be blessed by it and you will be blessed by using it. Use your gift in the right way.

If you don't know what your gift is, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal it to you. Pray for opportunities to use the gift he is going to give you.

### Discussion questions

What is your gift and how are you using it?

If you are not using your gift, why not? What is stopping you?

