

Spiritual Gifts 1

Text: Romans 12:3-7

Introduction:

1. Second major division of the Epistle – Practical Christian Living.
2. Chapters 12-16 – “The Apostle exhorts to a life in conformity with the exalted position in which chapters 1-8 place the believer.” (Wuest)
3. This lesson: Exhortation to humble service within the local church body. We are to be faithful in exercising the gift we have received through God’s grace.

I. The Mindset of Christian Service (Vs. 3)

A. We are to think humbly (3a)

1. ‘for’ = the specific exhortations that follow are connected to the exhortation of Vs. 1-2. Indicates that humility is the immediate effect of self-surrender to God. This way of thinking is an outflow of the transformation process described in Vs. 2. As our minds are renewed by the Word of God, it results in us having a right view of ourselves.
2. “more highly” = to over think, to think above or beyond. To think highly of oneself. We are not to be preoccupied with self in our service for the Lord. We are to have a humble view of ourselves and our importance.
3. The Apostle Paul illustrates the very truth he seeks to impress on his readers – “I say, through the grace given unto me”. In this statement, the Apostle Paul acknowledges that God is the source of what He is about to teach, thus making God the focus, not himself.
4. Phil. 2:3 *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”*

B. We are to think soberly (3b)

1. ‘soberly’ = sound, healthy. Being reasonable, sensible; not going beyond the set boundaries
2. “God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” = the specifics of this “sober” thinking. A humble, sober mind recognizes that God is the one who endows each member of the local church with their spiritual gifts and abilities. “The gifts we possess come from God and therefore are His doing.” (Sorenson)

II. The Medium of Christian Service (Vs. 4-5)

A. The Illustration (Vs. 4)

1. Paul uses the illustration of the physical body to further aid us to think properly about our position in relation to others in the local church.

The Gospel of God – Romans Series

2. A human body is unified (“one body”) but is made up of diverse parts (“many members”), each with a unique function (“office” = function, mode of acting). Principle = diversity within unity

B. The Application (Vs. 5)

1. The illustration of the human body is now applied to the spiritual body, which is the local church. The local church is one unified body and yet it has a diversity of ‘members’
2. The church is likened to a body of which Christ is the head. Col. 1:18 **“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”**
3. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27
 - a. 1st & 2nd Corinthians written approx. 1 year prior to Romans.
 - b. Just like man was formed physically by the hands of Almighty God, so the spiritual body of the church was crafted and designed by God.

III. The Modes of Christian Service (Vs. 6-8)

A. The Source of the Gifts (Vs. 6a)

1. There are 7 gifts with which God has equipped the body.
2. These gifts are given to us through God’s grace.

B. The Specifics of the Gifts (Vs. 6b-8)

Knowing our spiritual gift will help us 1. To better serve the Lord 2. To better understand & appreciate others in the local church

Imagine 7 members of our church. They are all a part of our church body but each one of them has a different gift (one of the seven gifts described here). Let’s take a look at each member and his/her gift. We will cover the first 3 gifts in this message.

1. **The Rebuker** – *“whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith”*
 - a. Biblical Illustration of the gift of prophecy: Peter the Apostle
 - b. Qualities: The prophet is not so much a gift of foretelling but forthtelling. Even in the O.T. context, much of the prophet’s work was that of declaring the Revelation of God’s Word to the people. The prophet is motivated in the following areas:
 - i. The declaration of the truth in clear terms.
 - ii. The denouncing of sin and error. Peter’s prophetic gift is highlighted in his preaching. He unmasks the wickedness of the Jews in sharp, clear, plain language. E.g. *“Him...ye have taken, and by **wicked hands** have crucified and slain”* (Acts 2:23) *“But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And **killed the Prince of life...**”* (Acts 3:14-15)

The Gospel of God – Romans Series

- iii. The discernment of sin, hypocrisy and error. Peter's gift was exercised in his discernment of the hypocrisy of Ananias and Saphira – "...*why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost...*" (Acts 5:3)
 - iv. To be transparent and humble about faults. The prophet feels the need for a clear conscience before he rebukes others.
 - c. Potential pitfalls: If not exercised with the Spirit's control, and with the balance of other gifts, a prophet can be inclined to:
 - i. Be deficient in compassion.
 - ii. Be too hard on themselves. If prophets come across as hard on others, know that they are harder on themselves.
 - iii. Jump to conclusions too quickly and err in judgment. Peter was a somewhat impulsive "speak first, think later" type of person. Peter spoke first more than any other disciple in the Gospels.
 - iv. Be too hasty in their judgments of individuals. Prophets tend to have an immediate read out on people which is often accurate but sometimes it is incorrect.
2. **The Helper** – "*Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering*"
- a. Qualities: The servant gift lies in the realm of practical helps. The servant is typically motivated in the following areas:
 - i. The practical needs of others. The servant has an eye to identify what needs to be done, even when it is often overlooked by others. They delight to free others up for more important things and are willing to neglect their own jobs list to help others.
 - ii. Servants are those who are the willing workers of the church. They are quick to put up their hand and volunteer for a task that needs doing.
 - b. Pitfalls: If exercised in the flesh and not in the Spirit, an individual with the gift of helps can be prone to:
 - i. Driving themselves in the flesh rather than relying on God's power.
 - ii. Failing to rest in the Lord with what does not get completed by the end of the day.
 - iii. Failing to wait on the Lord and trust Him for the timing in the completion of projects.
 - iv. Burn out due to overwork and inability to say no.
 - v. Neglecting their devotional life due to being "too busy serving"
 - vi. Getting frustrated with others who appear indifferent to the needs

The Gospel of God – Romans Series

- c. Biblical Illustration of a Servant: Martha (Luke 10:38-42).
Martha's drive to serve was a good one but she allowed the tasks to become more important than the Lord Himself.
- 3. **The Teacher** – *"he that teacheth, on teaching"*
 - a. Qualities: The teacher is the "facts and figures" gift in the church. They are thorough and precise in their research and often gifted in their presentation and communication of things "hard to be understood" in the Word of God. They are sticklers for accurate doctrine, so much so that they sometimes are mistaken for prophets. The teacher will typically be motivated in the following areas:
 - i. To study God's Word diligently and thoroughly, paying attention to things like the meaning of words (e.g. Greek & Hebrew)
 - ii. To contend for accurate doctrine.
 - iii. To provide good teaching resources. Teachers often write books and study materials.
 - b. Pitfalls: Teachers can be prone to the following mistakes:
 - i. Becoming puffed up in intellectual pride due to their accomplished research. E.g. Their resources are the best available on a particular subject!
 - ii. Arguing on minor points of detail that do not really fall into the category of "earnestly contending for the faith"
 - iii. Dismissing a whole sermon, lesson or resource due to a minor flaw (perceived or real).
 - iv. Impatient with those who will not accept their conclusions quickly. In effect the teacher's attitude can be, "Look, I've done all the research for you, these are the facts so just accept it."
 - c. Biblical Illustration of a Teacher: Luke, the physician and historian. Luke 1:4 *"That thou mayest know the **certainty** of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."* Luke's attention to detail is breath taking (E.g. Acts 28:11)

Conclusion:

1. What is our attitude to ourselves? Are we puffed up in pride, thinking too highly of our position within the local church?
2. What is our attitude to others? Do we appreciate the diversity of gifts God has placed in the body?
3. Do we know our spiritual gift and are we seeking to faithfully exercise it for God's glory?