

## The Importance of the Gifted Body Romans 12:3-8

Romans 12:1–8 (NKJV)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

<sup>3</sup> For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. <sup>4</sup> For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. <sup>6</sup> Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with

liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

## Introduction

The last couple of decades have proven to be some of the most challenging years of ministry that I have ever seen or been involved with. The simplicity of church life is gone.

It wasn't too long ago that the concerns that pastors had for the local ministry might be rare occurrence of a bad book in the Christian Bookstore or the Jehovah witnesses or Mormons showing up on the doorstep of a member of the church attempting to confuse them on the Deity of Christ or salvation by grace alone apart from works.

Things have changed radically in a number of ways.

Three decades ago, we saw the emergence of the seeker sensitive movement, or the seeker church. This was a fundamental shift in the purpose of the church. Rick Warren had learned his methodology from Robert Shuller, and Bill Hybles implemented this methodology that influenced thousands of pastors. The churches focus now was the seeker not the saint. Instead of systematically teaching the

Bible in the worship service for the edification and building up of the saints, it was now evangelism of the seeker. Pastors would survey the community of the “unchurched” as they call them or as the Bible says, “lost and unsaved” and ask them what they would like in the church.

It was no longer what God wanted in the church or what the Bible said should happen in church worship but rather unbelievers were dictating what they wanted in church. So if the hymns were boring and not upbeat, then ditch them for the praise songs or in many cases, secular songs rechristianized. If the sermons were too long or too doctrinal or especially the boring expositional sermons, they needed to go, and the talks (not sermons) needed to be upbeat, practical and about things I deal with every day.

This by itself is hugely problematic and had given us much of what we see in churches today. But that is only a symptom of a much greater problem.

The real root of the problem is a self-centered church.

We already have a major problem of self-centeredness because of our fallen nature. But the seeker movement poured gas on the fire.

Where as the Bible teaches us that we should die to self and we should offer ourselves as a living sacrifice (totally abandoning self). The church was now teaching that it was all about you. The church exists for you and to serve your needs.

So you now shop for churches like you shop for a good pair of shoes. If it fits good and makes you feel good, then you buy it.

This is foreign to the N.T teaching of the local church. The church does not exist for you. It exist for the glory of God. The ministry of the church exist to enable you to be more Christ like so you can Glorify God all the more. The pastors, elders and deacons exist and function in a church to point you to Christ and to be more like Him.

What is preached, taught and sung in worship, the times of bible study and fellowship are all for the purpose of enabling you to be more like Christ for the Glory of God.

All that we are and all that we do is a means to an end and the chief end is to Glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

The fueling and feeding of our love of self in the church of America has greatly affected its effectiveness and its saintliness. We are now a church consumers and not worshippers.

Another equally troubling problem in recent years is isolation and independence. Isolationism is growing rapidly in a culture of smartphones and internet. More and more are opting for the church of cyberspace than the local church. They simply find it easier to stay home and not get involved. There is a whole lot less drama and I don't have to do anything. We are breeding a culture of self-centered isolationist. The idea behind this is that the local church is not that important. I can get all that I need from the church like I can order everything I need from amazon.

The belief is that church is as sermon and a sermon is church and as long as I can get a good sermon then I have got what I needed. But this is foundational error to believe that. Church is not just a sermon, and a sermon is not church. Church is a body of people, elect of God and uniquely gifted and equipped to serve the whole church to enable them to become like Christ. And to add the obvious, the church ordinances do not occur on the internet. The Lord's supper assumes assembly. Even Paul says, when you come together. The institution of the Lord's supper was not by email invitation and over Skype or Zoom. And baptism is impossible over internet what ever the mode is that you believe in. The Gifts of the body are not for you in isolation, but

rather in assembly. My gift is not for me but for you and your gift is not for you but for me.

The other is independence. In 1776 on July 4th America declared its independence and in the last few decades members and attendees of local churches have been declaring their independence of each other.

This basically says, I don't need you for my Christian life. It's not usually said that mean, but that is essential what is meant. I can do this on my own and would rather not have the personal accountability.

In fact, if you attempt to hold someone accountable about anything, like attendance, or giving or service or just doing a good job, they often leave church. Because of our saturation of independence, many detest accountability. The independent attitude say, I will stay out of your business and you stay out of mine.

Some even attend larger churches because they know they can go without being noticed. Because there are so many they don't have to worry about being asked to get involved or expected to do anything. The underlying assumption is that I don't need the body and the body does not need me.

Consider the words of Hebrews

### Hebrews 10:24–25 (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

### Ephesians 4:11–16 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; <sup>14</sup> that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, <sup>15</sup> but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—<sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every

part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:16 (NASB95)

16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

So in summary, there is no place for self centeredness, isolation and independence in the Church.

The Church is a body of believers that are in great need of each other in order to become all that God intends for His church to be.

Review

Romans 12:1–8 (NKJV)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that



you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

<sup>3</sup> For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. <sup>4</sup> For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another

Lesson:

<sup>6</sup> Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

The spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament, primarily in Romans 12 and in 1 Corinthians 12, fall into three categories: **sign, speaking, and serving**. Before

the New Testament was written, men had no standard for judging the truthfulness of someone who preached, taught, or witnessed in the name of Christ. The sign gifts authenticated the teaching of the apostles—which was the measure of all other teaching

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). [Romans](#) (Vol. 2, p. 168). Moody Press.

## Sign Gifts

2 Corinthians 12:12 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

also in I Corinthians 12

1 Corinthians 12:4–11 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. <sup>7</sup> But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*: <sup>8</sup> for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings

by the same Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

Other sign gifts might include

I Cor 12:9-10

<sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another **gifts of healings** by the same Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another the **working of miracles**.

Some might include the gift of wisdom, word of knowledge and discernment of spirits in these too

## **Second are Speaking Gifts.**

These would include Prophecy, Teaching and Tongues and interpretation of tongues.

### **A Few thoughts about Tongues.**

**1. They are real, historic or current, learnable languages.**

**γλῶσσα *glōssa*.** Of a particular language or dialect as spoken by a particular people (Acts 2:11; 1 Cor. 13:1; Sept.: Gen. 10:5, 20; Dan. 1:4). Used for the people

who speak a particular language, e.g., tribes, people, and tongues (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15; Sept.: Is. 66:18; Dan. 3:4, 7, 30, 32).

**(C)** In the phrases *glóssais hetérais* (2083), tongues others or different, meaning different than their own native tongues. Also *glóssais kainaís* (2537), qualitatively new, to speak languages not known to them before, means to speak in or with tongues other than their own native tongue (Mark 16:17; Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:30; 14:2, 4–6, 13, 18, 23, 27, 39).

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

## 2. They are not Angelic languages.

1 Corinthians 13:1–3 (NKJV)

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> And though I bestow all my goods to feed

*the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

**3. They are not what we we are currently witnessing today in Charismatic, Pentecostal, Prosperity Gospel movements.**

**4. They were a sign to Israel for Judgement.**

1 Corinthians 14:21–22 (NKJV)

<sup>21</sup> In the law it is written:

*“With men of other tongues and other lips  
I will speak to this people;  
And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,”*

says the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.

**5. They existed in the New Testament era for Revelation and Edification.**

1 Corinthians 14:1–14 (NKJV)

Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy. <sup>2</sup> For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. <sup>3</sup> But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. <sup>4</sup> He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. <sup>5</sup> I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

<sup>6</sup> But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? <sup>7</sup> Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? <sup>8</sup> For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? <sup>9</sup> So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. <sup>10</sup> There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them *is* without significance. <sup>11</sup> Therefore, if I do not know the

meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks *will be* a foreigner to me. <sup>12</sup> Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual *gifts*, *let it be* for the edification of the church *that* you seek to excel.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. <sup>14</sup> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

1 Corinthians 14:15–19 (NKJV)

<sup>15</sup> What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. <sup>16</sup> Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? <sup>17</sup> For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

<sup>18</sup> I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; <sup>19</sup> yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

**6. They governed by strict commands so that everything is done decently and in order.**

1 Corinthians 14:26–28 (NKJV)

<sup>26</sup> How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. <sup>27</sup> If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at the most three, *each* in turn, and let one interpret. <sup>28</sup> But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.

### 1 Corinthians 14:33–35 (NKJV)

<sup>33</sup> For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

<sup>34</sup> Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says. <sup>35</sup> And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

## **7. The Bible specifically states Tongues will cease**

### 1 Corinthians 13:8–10 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues,



they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part. <sup>10</sup> But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

Some things that convince me that this gift as cease.

**Its purpose as a judicial sign of Israel's judgment ceased to apply anymore.**

Paul reminds the Corinthians that “In the Law it is written, ‘By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,’ says the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:21; cf. Isa. 28:11–12). In other words, because Israel refused to listen and believe when God spoke to them in clear language, the prophet said the day would come when He would speak to them in a language they could not understand, as a testimony against their rejection of Him.

Tongues were not given as a sign to believers “but to unbelievers” (1 Cor. 14:22), specifically unbelieving Jews. With the destruction of the Temple by the Roman general Titus in a.d. 70, Judaism ended except as a shadow religion. When the Temple was destroyed, the sacrificial system was destroyed, and the need for a Jewish priesthood was destroyed

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1984). [1 Corinthians](#) (p. 360). Moody Press.

**tongues ceased because they were an inferior means of edification.**

**the gift of tongues has ceased because its purpose as a confirming sign of apostolic authority and doctrine ended when the New Testament was completed**

**it is reasonable to believe that tongues have ceased because their use is mentioned only in the earlier New Testament books the gift of tongues has evidently ceased because, since the apostolic age, it has reappeared only spasmodically and questionably throughout nineteen centuries of church history**

. The gift of tongues is nowhere alluded to or found in any writings of the church Fathers. Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Corinthian church in the year 95, only about four decades after Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. In discussing problems in the church, Clement made no mention of tongues. Apparently both the use and misuse of that gift had ceased. Justin Martyr, the great church Father of the second century, visited many of the churches of his day, yet in his voluminous writings he mentions nothing of tongues. It is not mentioned even among his several lists of spiritual gifts. Origen, a brilliant church scholar who lived during the third century, makes no mention of tongues. In his polemic against Celsus he explicitly argues that the sign gifts of the apostolic age were temporary and were not exercised by Christians of his day. Chrysostom, perhaps the greatest of the post-New Testament writers, lived from 347 until 407. Writing on 1 Corinthians 12 he states that tongues and the other miraculous gifts not only had ceased but could not even be accurately defined. Augustine, in his comments on Acts 2:4, wrote, "In the earliest times the Holy Spirit fell on them that believed and they spoke with tongues. These were signs adapted to that time, for there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit. That thing was done for betokening and it passed away."

The historians and theologians of the early church unanimously maintained that tongues ceased to exist after the time of the apostles. The only exception of which we know was within the movement led by Montanus, a second century heretic who believed that divine revelation continued through him beyond the New Testament.

Apparently no other tongues-speaking was practiced in Christianity until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when it appeared in several Roman Catholic groups in Europe (Cevenols and Jansenists) and among the Shakers in New England. The nineteenth century Irvingites of London were marked by unbiblical claims of revelations and by "tongues-speak." For over 1800 years the gift of tongues, along with the other miracle gifts, was unknown in the life and doctrine of orthodox Christianity. Then, around the turn of the twentieth century, tongues became a major emphasis within the holiness movement, a large section of which developed into modern Pentecostalism. The charismatic movement, which began in 1960, carried the practice of tongues beyond traditional Pentecostalism into many other denominations, churches, and groups, both Catholic and Protestant, filling the void in true spiritual living with false experience.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1984). [1 Corinthians](#) (pp. 361–362). Moody Press.

It seems evident, therefore, that Paul did not mention the sign gifts in Romans because their place in the church was already coming to an end. They belonged to a unique era in the church's life and would have no permanent place in its ongoing ministry. It is significant, therefore, that the seven gifts mentioned in Romans 12:6–8 are all within the categories of speaking and serving.

It is also important to note that in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses the term *pneumatikos* (v. 1, lit., "spirituals") to describe the specific divinely bestowed gifts mentioned in verses 8–10. He explains that "there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit" (v. 4), and that "the same Spirit works

all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills” (v. 11).

But in Romans 12, the apostle uses the term *charisma* (gifts), which is from *charis* (grace). In First Corinthians, Paul emphasizes the nature and authority of the gifts—spiritual endowments empowered by the Holy Spirit. In Romans he simply emphasizes their source—the **grace** of God.

Paul next lists some categories of giftedness as examples.

## 1. prophecy

**if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; (12:6b)**

The first spiritual gift in this list is prophecy. Some interpreters believe this was a special revelatory gift that belonged only to the apostles, and, like the sign gifts, ceased after those men died. While it certainly had a revelatory aspect during Old Testament and apostolic times, it was not limited to revelation. It was exercised when there was public proclamation of divine truth, old or new.

In 1 Corinthians 12:10 it is linked with sign gifts, supernatural and revelatory. Here it is linked with

speaking and serving gifts, leading to the conclusion that it had both revelatory and non-revelatory aspects. The Old Testament or New Testament prophet (or apostle) might speak direct revelation, but could and did also declare what had been revealed previously. The gift of prophecy does not pertain to the content but rather to the means of proclamation. In our day, it is active enablement to proclaim God's Word already written in Scripture. Paul gives no distinction to this gift among the other six, which are clearly ongoing gifts in the church, thus not limiting it to revelation.

*Prophēteia* (**prophecy**) has the literal meaning of speaking forth, with no connotation of prediction or other supernatural or mystical significance. The gift of **prophecy** is simply the gift of preaching, of proclaiming the Word of God. God used many Old and New Testament prophets to foretell future events, but that was never an indispensable part of prophetic ministry.

Paul gives perhaps the best definition of the prophetic gift in 1 Corinthians: “One who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation” (1 Cor. 14:3). Peter's admonition also applies to that gift: “Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; ... so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to

whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever” (1 Pet. 4:11).

When God called Moses to deliver Israel out of Egypt, Moses gave the excuse, “Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” (Ex. 4:10). Although angered at Moses’ lack of trust, God said, “Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently.... You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do” (vv. 14–15).

The gift of prophecy is the gift of being God’s public spokesman, primarily to God’s own people—to instruct, admonish, warn, rebuke, correct, challenge, comfort, and encourage.

God also uses His prophets to reach unbelievers. “If all prophesy,” Paul explained to the Corinthians, “and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you” (1 Cor. 14:24–25).

God used certain prophets at certain times to give new revelation and to predict future events, but He has used and continues to use all of His prophets to

speak His truth in His behalf. They are God's instruments for proclaiming and making relevant His Word to His world.

John Calvin said that, by prophesying, he understood not the gift of foretelling the future but of interpreting Scripture, so that a prophet is an interpreter of God's will.

In his commentary on this text, Calvin wrote:

I prefer to follow those who extend this word wider, even to the peculiar gift of revelation, by which any one skillfully and wisely performed the office of an interpreter in explaining the will of God. Hence prophecy at this day in the Christian Church is hardly anything else than the right understanding of the Scripture, and the peculiar faculty of explaining it, inasmuch as all the ancient prophecies and the oracles of God have been completed in Christ and in his gospel. For in this sense it is taken by Paul when he says, "I wish that you spoke in tongues, but rather that ye prophecy," (1 Cor. 14:5:) "In part we know and in part we prophecy," (1 Cor. 13:9). And it does not appear that Paul intended here to mention those miraculous graces by which Christ at first rendered illustrious his gospel; but, on the contrary, we find he refers only to ordinary gifts, such as were to

continue perpetually in the Church. (*Calvin's Commentaries*, v. xix, "Romans" [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991], p. 460)

In sixteenth-century Switzerland, pastors in Zurich came together every week for what they called "prophesying." They shared exegetical, expositional, and practical insights they had gleaned from Scripture that helped them more effectively minister to their people in that day.

The book of Acts speaks of many prophets besides the apostles. Agabus, part of a group of prophets (the others are unnamed) from Jerusalem, predicted a famine that would plague Judea during the reign of Emperor Claudius (Acts 11:27–28) and later foretold Paul's arrest and imprisonment (21:10–11). "Judas and Silas," on the other hand, "also being prophets themselves," gave no predictions or new revelation but simply "encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message" after Paul and Barnabas had delivered the letter from the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:32; cf. vv. 22–31).

**6.....** if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith;

Whatever the form his message may take, the prophet is to minister it **according to the proportion of his faith**. Because the *Greek includes the definite article*, **faith** may here refer to *the* faith, that is, the full gospel message. In that case, **according to the proportion of his faith** would relate objectively to the prophet's being careful to preach in accordance with the gospel revealed through the apostles—"the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). It could also relate subjectively to the believer's personal understanding and insight concerning the gospel—to his speaking **according to the individual proportion of ... faith** that God has sovereignly assigned to him for the operation of his gift.

Whether it relates to revelation, prediction, declaration, instruction, encouragement, or anything else, all **prophecy** was always to proclaim the Word of God and exalt the Son of God, because "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). Paul's specific charge to Timothy applies to all proclaimers of God's Word, including prophets: "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim. 4:2).



## 2. Service

Romans 12:7 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> or ministry, *let us use it in our* ministering; service  
**if service, in his serving;** (12:7 *a*)

The second spiritual gift is that of service, a general term for ministry. Service translates *diakonia*, from which we also get *deacon* and *deaconess*—those who serve. The first deacons in the early church were “men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” who were placed in charge of providing food for the widows in order to free the apostles to devote themselves “to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:3–4).

**Service** is a simple, straightforward gift that is broad in its application. It seems to carry a meaning similar to that of the gift of helps mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28, although a different Greek term (*antilēpsis*) is used there. This gift certainly applies beyond the offices of deacon and deaconess and is the idea in Paul’s charge to the Ephesian elders to “help the weak” (Acts 20:35). The gift of service is manifested in every sort of practical help that Christians can give one another in Jesus’ name.

## 3. Teaching

## Romans 12:7 (NKJV)

7 .... he who teaches, in teaching;

The third spiritual gift is that of teaching. Again, the meaning is simple and straightforward. *Didaskōn* (teaches) refers to the act of teaching, and *didaskalia* (teaching) can refer to what is taught as well as to the act of teaching it. Both of those meanings are appropriate to this gift.

The Christian **who teaches** is divinely gifted with special ability to interpret and present God's truth understandably. The primary difference between teaching and prophesying is not in content but in the distinction between the ability to proclaim and the ability to give systematic and regular instruction in God's Word.

The gift of **teaching** could apply to a teacher in seminary, Christian college, Sunday school, or any other place, elementary or advanced, where God's truth is taught. The earliest church was characterized by regular teaching (Acts 2:42). The Great Commission includes the command, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, ... teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matt. 28:19–20). Paul's spiritual gift included

features of both preaching and teaching (2 Tim. 1:11).

Later in the epistle just cited, Paul charged Timothy: “And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Barnabas had that gift and ministered it in Antioch beside Paul, where they were “teaching and preaching, with many others also, the word of the Lord” (Acts 15:35).

Likewise “a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, ... had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus” (Acts 18:24–25).

Jesus, of course, was both the supreme Preacher and supreme Teacher. Even after His resurrection, He continued to teach. When He joined the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, “beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.... And they said to one another, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?’ ” (Luke 24:27, 32). Both *diermēneuō* (“explained,” v. 27) and *dianoigō* (“explaining,” lit. “opening up,” v. 32) are synonyms

of *didaskōn* (**teaches**) and *didaskalia* (**teaching**) in Romans 12:7.

Regular, systematic teaching of the Word of God is the primary function of the pastor-teacher. As an elder, he is required “to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2) and to hold “fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9).

Above all, Paul entreated Timothy, “pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching” (1 Tim. 4:16). Pastors are not the only ones the Lord calls and empowers to teach. But if a pastor’s ministry is to be judged, among other things, on the soundness of his teaching—as the passages just cited indicate—then it seems reasonable to assume that, in some measure, he should have the gift of **teaching**.

#### **4. exhortation**

**or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; (12:8a)**

As with the previous three gifts, the connotation of exhortation is broad. Both the verb *parakaleō* (exhorts) and the noun *paraklēsis* (exhortation) are compounds of the same two Greek words (*para* and *kaleō*) and have the literal meaning of calling someone to one’s side. They are closely related to

*paraklētos* (advocate, comforter, helper), a title Jesus used both of Himself (“Helper,” John 14:16) and of the Holy Spirit (“another Helper”; John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). In 1 John 2:1, this word is translated “Advocate,” referring to Jesus Christ.

The gift of **exhortation**, therefore, encompasses the ideas of advising, pleading, encouraging, warning, strengthening, and comforting. At one time the gift may be used to persuade a believer to turn from a sin or bad habit and at a later time to encourage that same person to maintain his corrected behavior. The gift may be used to admonish the church as a whole to obedience to the Word.

Like the gift of showing mercy (see below), **exhortation** may be exercised in comforting a brother or sister in the Lord who is facing trouble or is suffering physically or emotionally. One **who exhorts** may also be used of God to encourage and undergird a weak believer who is facing a difficult trial or persistent temptation. Sometimes he may use his gift simply to walk beside a friend who is grieving, discouraged, frustrated, or depressed, to give help in whatever way is needed. This gift may be exercised in helping someone carry a burden that is too heavy to bear alone.

Paul and Barnabas were exercising the ministry of **exhortation** when “they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God’ ” (Acts 14:21–22). This ministry is reflected in Paul’s charge to Timothy to “reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2).

It is the ministry of **exhortation** of which the writer of Hebrews speaks as he admonishes believers to “consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:24–25). The sentiment that motivates this gift is also exhibited in the beautiful benediction with which that epistle closes: “Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (13:20–21).

In summary, it might be said that, just as prophecy proclaims the truth and teaching systematizes and

explains the truth, **exhortation** calls believers to obey and follow the truth, to live as Christians are supposed to live—consistent with God’s revealed will. In many servants of Christ, all of these abilities are uniquely and beautifully blended.

## 5. giving

### **he who gives, with liberality; (12:8b)**

The fifth category of giftedness is that of giving. The usual Greek verb for giving is *didōmi*, but the word here is the intensified *metadidōmi*, which carries the additional meanings of sharing and imparting that which is one’s own. The one who exercises this gift gives sacrificially of himself.

When asked by the multitudes what they should do to “bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance,” John the Baptist replied, “Let the man who has two tunics share [*metadidōi*] with him who has none; and let him who has food do likewise (Luke 3:8, 11).

In the opening of his letter to Rome, Paul expressed his desire to “impart [*metadidōi*] some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established” (Rom. 1:11). And in his letter to Ephesus he makes clear that, whether or not a believer has the gift of giving, he is to have the spirit of generosity that characterizes this gift.

Every Christian should “labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share [*metadidōi*] with him who has need” (Eph. 4:28). It seems certain that Paul had elements of such generosity in his gift. And nowhere is it reflected more than in his service to the saints at Thessalonica.

After having ministered to them for a relatively short time, he could say with perfect humility and sincerity that the gospel that he, Sylvanus, and Timothy brought them “did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake” (1 Thess. 1:5; cf. 1:1). “Having thus a fond affection for you,” he continued a few verses later, “we were well-pleased to impart [*metadidōi*] to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us” (2:8).

**Liberality** translates *haplotēs*, which has the root meaning of singleness and came to connote simplicity (as in the kjv), singlemindedness, openheartedness, and then generosity. It carries the idea of sincere, heartfelt giving that is untainted by affectation or ulterior motive. The Christian **who gives with liberality** gives *of* himself, not *for* himself. He does not give for thanks or recognition,



but for the sake of the one who receives his help and for the glory of the Lord.

Those who give **with liberality** are the opposite of those who “sound a trumpet before [themselves], as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men” (Matt. 6:2). Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead by God for lying to the Holy Spirit, and behind their lie was the selfish desire to hold back for themselves some of the proceeds from the sale of their property (Acts 5:1–10). In that tragic instance, failing to give **with liberality** cost the lives of the givers.

Ananias and Sapphira were exceptions in the early church, which was characterized by those who voluntarily possessed “all things in common; and [who] began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need” (Acts 2:44–45).

Because the inns could not begin to house all the Jews who came to Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, most of them stayed in homes of fellow Jews. But those who trusted in Christ immediately became unwelcome. M

any wanted to stay within the community of believers in Jerusalem but had no place to stay. Some had difficulty buying food to eat. In that crisis, Christians who had the means spontaneously

shared their homes, their food, and their money with fellow believers in need.

Many years later, the churches of Macedonia had an abundance of believers who exercised the gift of giving to its fullest. “In a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality,”

Paul said. “For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God” (2 Cor. 8:2–5).

They gave **with** great **liberality**, believing that sowing bountifully meant reaping bountifully (2 Cor. 9:6).

## 6. leadership

**he who leads, with diligence;** (12:8c)

**Leads** is from *proistēmi*, which has the basic meaning of “standing before” others and, hence, the idea of leadership. In the New Testament it is never used of governmental rulers but of headship in the family (1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12) and in the church (1 Tim. 5:17). In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul refers to the

same gift by a different name, “administrations” (*kubernēsis*), which means “to guide.” In Acts 27:11 and Revelation 18:17, it is used of a pilot or helmsman, the person who steers, or **leads**, a ship.

Although it is not limited to those offices, the gift of church leadership clearly belongs to elders, deacons, and deaconesses. It is significant that Paul makes no mention of leaders in his first letter to Corinth. Lack of a functioning leadership would help explain its serious moral and spiritual problems, which certainly would have been exacerbated by that deficiency.

“Free-for-all” democracy amounts to anarchy and is disastrous in any society, including the church. The absence of leaders results in everyone doing what is “right in his own eyes,” as the Israelites did under the judges (Judg. 17:6; 21:25; cf. Deut. 12:8).

Effective leadership must be done **with diligence**, with earnestness and zeal. *Spoudē* (**diligence**) can also carry the idea of haste (see Mark 6:25; Luke 1:39). Proper leadership therefore precludes procrastination and idleness.

Whether it is possessed by church officers or by members who direct such things as Sunday school, the youth group, the nursery, or a building program, the gift of leadership is to be exercised with carefulness, constancy, and consistency.

## 7. showing mercy

### **he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (12:8d)**

The seventh and last spiritual category mentioned here is that of showing mercy. *Eleeō* (shows mercy) carries the joint idea of actively demonstrating sympathy for someone else and of having the necessary resources to successfully comfort and strengthen that person.

The gifted Christian **who shows mercy** is divinely endowed with special sensitivity to suffering and sorrow, with the ability to notice misery and distress that may go unnoticed by others, and with the desire and means to help alleviate such afflictions. This gift involves much more than sympathetic feeling. It is feeling put into action. The Christian with this gift always finds a way to express his feelings of concern in practical help. He **shows** his **mercy** by what he says to and what he does for the one in need.

The believer **who shows mercy** may exercise his gift in hospital visitation, jail ministry, or in service to the homeless, the poor, the handicapped, the suffering, and the sorrowing. This gift is closely related to that of exhortation, and it is not uncommon for believers to have a measure of both.

This enablement is not to be ministered grudgingly or merely out of a sense of duty, but **with cheerfulness**. As everyone knows who has had a time of suffering or special need, the attitude of a fellow believer can make the difference between his being a help or a hindrance. The counsel of Job's friends only drove him into deeper despair.

“He who despises his neighbor sins,” the writer of Proverbs tells us, “but happy is he who is gracious to the poor” (Prov. 14:21); and “He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him” (Prov. 14:31). The key word in those verses is *gracious*. The genuine helper always serves with gracious **cheerfulness**, and is never condescending or patronizing.

Reading from the book of Isaiah, Jesus testified of Himself that “the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18–19). The very Son of God in His incarnation showed great mercy with gracious **cheerfulness**.

Would that all Christians with this gift not only would minister it cheerfully but also regularly and consistently. There would be far fewer needy who

have to depend on a godless, impersonal government or social agency. And if Christ's people patterned their lives after His gracious example, far more people would hear and respond to the saving gospel that meets their deepest need.

In regard to that gift and every other, believers should "kindle afresh the gift of God which is in [them]" (2 Tim. 1:6).

The prolific Puritan John Owen wrote that spiritual gifts are that without which the church cannot subsist in the world, nor can believers be useful to one another and the rest of mankind to the glory of Christ as they ought to be. They are the powers of the world to come, those effectual operations of the power of Christ whereby His kingdom was erected and is preserved (see *The Holy Spirit* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, n.d.]).

Although we obviously must pay attention to our gift, we can never faithfully exercise it by focusing on the gift itself. ....We can serve Christ only as we become like Christ, and we can exercise the Spirit's gifts only as we present ourselves as living sacrifices and submit to His continuing transformation and sanctification of our lives.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). [Romans](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 168–178). Moody Press.

## Psalm 1:1–6 (NKJV)

- 1 Blessed *is* the man  
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,  
Nor stands in the path of sinners,  
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
- 2 But his delight *is* in the law of the Lord,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He shall be like a tree  
Planted by the rivers of water,  
That brings forth its fruit in its season,  
Whose leaf also shall not wither;  
And whatever he does shall prosper.
- 4 The ungodly *are* not so,  
But *are* like the chaff which the wind drives  
away.
- 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the  
judgment,  
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
- 6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

## Hebrews 13:20–21 (NKJV)

<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, <sup>21</sup> make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.