

Do Not Neglect your Gift, The Importance of the Gifted Body

Romans 12:3-8

Introduction:

In the pastoral epistles of First and Second Timothy, Paul calls on Timothy to persevere in ministry, knowing that the ministry is hard, and the struggles and battles run deep and long. False teachers had already affected the churches and there were grumblings within the church about the qualifications and effectiveness of a young man like Timothy. But is it clear that Timothy was a uniquely gifted man, whom the Apostle Paul had personally disciplined and there was confirmation that Timothy was qualified and gifted to be in the ministry. So Paul calls on him

..... be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.... Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he

competes according to the rules. The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.... Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

2 Timothy 2:1, 3–6, 22:
MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [1 Timothy](#) (p. 179). Moody Press.

Earlier in the same letter Paul writes

I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.... For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which

has been entrusted to you. ² Timothy 1:3–8, 12–15 MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [1 Timothy](#) (pp. 178–179). Moody Press.

In I Timothy 4:14, Paul writes,

¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. ¹⁵ Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

The point that I find that stands out in all of this that Paul calls on Timothy to persevere in ministry, but one of the main fruits of perseverance is not neglecting the gifts of the Spirit. In other words, perseverance is directly tied to not neglecting the gifts you have. To neglect your gift is the same as not persevering. He is not calling for Timothy to just remain faithful in attendance of the local church or even to remain faithful morally so you can occupy the office of Elder and Pastor. But don't neglect the use of the gifts God has given to you to minister to the Body.

God is not calling for the leaderships or the Body of Christ to just occupy till I come. He is not commanding us to just come and be with each other.

He is not calling us to just worship the way some think worship is, i.e a vertically focused exhalation and admiration of God.

If I am understanding Paul right in this text we are looking at in Romans, He is telling us that complete sacrificial worship of God is first and foremost the understanding of your place and usefulness in the Body of Christ through your giftedness.

Remember Paul starts with

Romans 12:1-2 (LSB)

Therefore I exhort you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice— living, holy, *and* pleasing to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may approve what the will of God is, that which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Then in first place he addresses the use of gifts.

Unlike Corinthian church, he is not correcting the misuse or abuse of the gifts, but rather, he is addressing the lack of use. There neglect was hindering worship and sacrificial service to the

body and would have a severe impact on the edifying and maturing of the body.

This is why our text we are studying reads as it does,

Romans 12:4–8 (NKJV)

⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ 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; ⁷ or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Romans 12:6 (NASB95)

⁶ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, **each of us is to exercise them accordingly**: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

Romans 12:5–6 (ESV)

⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts

that differ according to the grace given to us, **let us use them:** if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;

Romans 12:6 (LSB)

6 but having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: whether prophecy, in agreement with the faith;

It is interesting 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 (our..nkjv) 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,

1 it was not limited to revelation. It was exercised when there was public proclamation of divine truth, old or new.

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

(It seems that it was used rather extensively as a means of revelation in the early NT era.)

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.

3. 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).

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.

But also

4. God also uses His prophets to reach unbelievers.

“If all prophesy,” (rather than speak in tongues with out interpretation) 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).

Acts 21:8–14 (NKJV)

⁸ On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

⁹ Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

¹⁰ And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' "

¹² Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.

¹³ Then Paul answered, “What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

¹⁴ So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, “The will of the Lord be done.”

Special note:

Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. ⁹ Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

They must be distinguished from individual believers with the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 12:10). They complemented the ministry of the apostles (Eph. 4:11), functioning exclusively within a particular local congregation, while the apostles had a broader ministry. In contrast to the apostles, whose doctrinal revelation was foundational to the church (Acts 2:42; Eph. 2:20), the message of the prophets was more personal and practical. They sometimes received new revelation from God concerning matters that would later be covered in Scripture. The main thrust of their ministry, however, was the reiteration or exposition of existing divine revelation (1 Cor. 14:3), much like today’s preachers and teachers of the Word.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 239–240). Moody Press.

Luke records no details regarding Philip’s daughters’ prophetic ministry. It is therefore impossible to know how often they prophesied or even if they did so more than once. However the New Testament does not permit women to assume the role of preachers or teachers in the church (1 Cor. 14:34–36; 1 Tim. 2:11–12). It is likely, therefore, that they prophesied by receiving divine revelation, rather than

preaching sermons. It is also possible that they spoke instructively to individuals rather than to congregations.

It has been recorded that early believers regarded these women as valuable sources of information on the early history of the church. The historian Eusebius notes that the church Father Papias received information from them (Ecclesiastical History, III.XXXIX; [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973], 126). Perhaps Luke used them as a source of information in writing his gospel and Acts. He would have had many opportunities to talk with them, not only during this visit, but also during Paul's two-year imprisonment at Caesarea (Acts 24:27).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 2, p. 240). Moody Press.

Acts 2:14–18 (NKJV)

Peter's Sermon

¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵ For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ *‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your young men shall see visions,*

Your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸ *And on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days;
And they shall prophesy.*

“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.

according to the proportion

ἀναλογία, **ας** *f.* a relation of proportion—‘in relation to, in proportion to.’ εἴτε προφητεῖαν **κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως** ‘if prophecy, then in accordance with the proportion of faith’ Ro 12:6. It is also possible to understand ἀναλογία in Ro 12:6 as meaning ‘in agreement with,’ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 777). United Bible Societies.

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).

1 Corinthians 14:29–33 (NKJV)

²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. ³⁰ But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. ³² And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. ³³ For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

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)

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

διακονία^b, ας *f.* (derivative of διακονέω^a ‘to serve,’ 35.19) the role or
position of **serving**—‘ministry,’ task

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 460). United Bible Societies.

The second spiritual gift is that of service, a general term for ministry. Service translates

diakonia, from which we also get *deacon* ...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...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 (NKJV)

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

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).

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)

gift 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).

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).

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.

Many 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) **ἐλεάω** or **ἐλεέω**; **ἔλεος, οὐς** *n*: to show kindness or concern for someone in serious need—‘to show mercy, to be merciful toward, to have mercy on, mercy.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 750). United Bible Societies.

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.