

Your Spiritual Gifts

Romans 12:6-8 (Various)

Introduction

The theme of Romans chapter 12 is service. We have been called to become a living sacrifice; this speaks of our *consecration* (v.1). In verse 2 Paul speaks of our *transformation*—refusing to be squeezed into this world’s mold. In Romans 12:3 we are called to *evaluation*—to think of ourselves with sober judgment. Paul has asked us that before we begin our discussion of spiritual service and spiritual gifts that we make sure of our spiritual attitude. Warren Wiersbe wrote; “Spiritual gifts are tools to build with, not toys to play with or weapons to fight with”.

I like that. Each person who knows and loves Jesus; each person who has been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit has received a gift or gifts in unique combinations for specific purposes. Each person is given gifts so the Body of Christ can grow in a healthy balanced way! No person has been given a gift to simply squander that gift on selfish ambitions. The believers in Corinth were tearing down the ministry because they were abusing spiritual gifts. On my desk is a can of professional Dust Off. It is a compressed gas duster. It’s to keep my computer and printer free of dust. Right on the can there is a warning label; “dust-off is a serious product. Inhalant abuse is illegal and can cause permanent injury or be fatal. Please use our product responsibly”.

Spiritual gifts come with a warning! You must use your gifts to glorify God; exalt Jesus and build up the Body of Christ. God’s gifts are for God’s people and for God’s service and God’s success.

Your Spiritual Gifts (v.6)

Romans 12:6 (NKJV) 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;

NLT “God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. If God has given you the ability to prophecy, speak out when you have faith that God is speaking through you.”

What is a spiritual gift? The word ‘gift’ (*charisma*) is the special ability given by God. A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability given by God to every Christian so that he or she may function in the Body of Christ. Spiritual gifts are distinct from natural talents. Unbelievers have natural talents. A spiritual gift is given by God and cannot be attained or secured on one’s own.

Spiritual gifts determine our place of ministry in the church. These gifts are given for our employment—not necessarily our enjoyment—but it has been my experience there is no greater joy than exercising God given gifts. Some Bible teachers suggest that each believer is given only one gift. I tend to reject that notion. I suggest that every believer is given several gifts, like clusters of rich ripe grapes; those grapes may be different in size or color—but they are all attached to the vine. Your gifts are like clusters of grapes; grouped in the right proportion. I suggest that you may have a dominant gift; with several less dominant or recessive gifts. Taken together and exercised according to “the grace that is given to us” (v.6). “Let us use them” does not appear in the original text—but is implied—by the verses that follow! We are not to neglect or gifts or abuse our gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:11 (NKJV) *“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”*

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Not my will. Not your will. “. . .as He wills”. We receive gifts in combination according to the supernatural wisdom of God’s Holy Spirit. If you can grasp this one significant principle you will avoid boasting (mentioned earlier) and a number of other personal pitfalls.

The Holy Spirit gives gifts. Not TV Evangelists. Gifts are not imparted or transferred by hanging out in grace of former dead evangelists (like Benny Hinn describes with Kathryn Kulman). Gifts are not received by reading the Bible like REI catalogue and picking the ones we want. The Bible is a supernatural document—but not a supernatural menu—where we pick gifts like entrees at our favorite Chinese restaurant. All gifts are given by the Sovereign God, and by the grace of God, not for our own glory, but for His glory.

Your Spiritual Lists (vv.7-8)

Romans 12:6–8 (NKJV)6Having 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; 7or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Paul begins with 7 fragrances designed by God for the Body of Christ.

The list is not exhaustive. There are at least five passages in the Bible that deal at length with spiritual gifts; as well as other passages that refer to gifts in passing.

Here we Paul brings up

- Prophecy
- Service/serving
- Teaching
- Encouragement
- One Who gives
- One Who Leads
- One Who shows mercy

Ephesians 4:11 (NKJV)11And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

- Apostles
- Prophets
- Evangelists
- Pastor-teachers (or pastors and teachers)

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1 Corinthians 12:8–10 (NKJV) 8for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,
9to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,
10to 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.

- A Word of Wisdom
- A Word of Knowledge
- Faith
- Healings
- Workings of miracles
- Prophecy
- Distinguishing of Spirits
- Kinds of tongues
- Interpretation of Tongues

1 Corinthians 12:28–30 (NKJV) 28And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

29Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?

30Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

- Apostles
- Prophets
- Teachers
- Miracles
- Healings
- Helps
- Guidance
- Speaking in tongues
- Interpreting tongues

Spiritual gifts are the special abilities to perform certain activities; yet all Christians are called on to witness, to tell people about Jesus; to serve, and to give. Witness, service and generosity are all common traits that identify Christians as Christians.

Different Bible teachers draw different conclusions about the precise number and meaning of the spiritual gifts listed in these passages. Some suggest that some gifts were signs to authenticate the gospel message. Others suggest that all the gifts are available and given supernaturally by the Holy Spirit in every generation. My own belief is that all the gifts given by the Holy Spirit to the Church are for each generation. I believe the arguments for the termination or cessation of certain gifts are not compelling or persuasive. I am going to proceed with the idea that each of these gifts continue to be given and exercised for the benefit of the Church. In other words all

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the gifts listed do not come with an expiration date or termination date. I do see in the Scriptures cautions, warnings, of dangerous abuses of God given gifts. We must proceed with caution, but we must also refuse to read into the text doctrines or instructions that aren't there.

We could with great benefit spend a Sunday on each of these gifts. But our interest this morning is to explore the gifts for the purpose of pointing you in the right direction!

Have you discovered your spiritual gift/gifts? When you discover and exercise your gifts it will lead to personal health and corporate growth. How can we know what our gifts are? Well here are three suggestions:

1. Discover what gifts are talked about in the Bible.
2. Be willing to exercise one or more gifts.
3. Be active in your church; the use of one gift will often lead to the recognition or discovery of other gifts.

My friend Don Stewart writes; “There are four Greek words, found in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians that describe spiritual gifts: charisma, pneumatikos, diakonia, and energemata. Each one describes certain aspects of spiritual gifts” (*Introduction To The Gifts of the Holy Spirit; PDF p.28*).

The word *charisma* in its plural form is *charismata*. Paul writes; “Now there are different gifts (*charismata*) but the same Spirit (1Cor. 12:4 HCSB). Charisma means gift of grace and so we might think of this as a special God given ability.

Pneumatikos: Things of the Spirit

1 Cor. 12:1 “Now about spiritual gifts (pneumatikos) brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.”

The word means ‘spirituals’ or ‘spiritual things’ or ‘spiritualities’; the English translators add the word ‘gift’—some think that is a mistake since the word does not necessarily mean a gift.

Diakonia: Service “An there are varieties of ministries (diakonia) and the same Lord (1 Cor.12:5 NASB); this leaves the reader with the impression that the gifts are for service of the ministry.

Energematic: Effect or Operation

A fourth word used describes spiritual gifts (*energematic*) means ‘effect’ or ‘operation’; we read this 1 Cor. 12:6 NKJV); ‘and there are diversities of activities (*energemata*) but it is the same God who works in all people”. Whenever the word is used in the New Testament it always refers to supernatural work, or operation by God. When we combine these words we find that spiritual gifts are abilities that God gives to believers for service in the Church. They are

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‘spiritual’ in the sense that they operate in the sphere or realm of the Spirit; while the source is the Holy Spirit; it does not mean that a spiritual gift will always look supernatural.

In the book of Acts we are introduced to Philip where he exercises the gift of serving (Acts 6:5). In his faithfulness it would appear that the Lord included the gift of evangelism (Acts 8:5). Faithful use of what we have will bring enlarged opportunities and the gifts that go with them!

Your Gifts For Life

Prophecy

What is prophecy? In the Old Testament it was the gift of the Holy Spirit given to certain men and women to proclaim or explain the word of God and the will of God.

There was sometimes a future element. God gave certain people the ability to see into the future by the power of the Holy Spirit (Daniel, Isaiah, John). Agabus in the New Testament predicted a drought and the arrest of Paul the Apostle in Jerusalem. The emphasis in the New Testament on prophecy has more to do with preaching the truth about Jesus and the gospel than predicting the future. The person with the gift of prophecy has the ability to communicate God’s message of truth with boldness and clarity. Certain individuals in the New Testament spoke with a strong sense of divine inspiration. They were to prophecy ‘according to the proportion’ *analogia*; *according to strength, clarity, passion or other qualities of faith; the character and mode of speaking is conformed to the rules and limits which are implied in the proportion of their individual degree of faith (see Ralph Earle p. 200)*. The function of the New Testament prophet was to edify, exhort and comfort. The Scripture is clear about this; “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men” (1 Cor.14:3). I Corinthians 12:10; “to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another interpretation of tongues.”

Prophets are bold and articulate. Prophecy is the gift of speaking under the inspiration of God’s Spirit. It may include prediction and proclamation. Clearly a person cannot be a prophet if they do not know the Lord. Certainly both Old and New Testament speaks of false prophets—who distort or twist the Word of God.

Ministry

The word is *diaconia*. The word appears three times in the book of Romans and is translated three different ways (see 11:13; office; 15:51; service). The word is used in Luke 10:40 of preparing a meal (Meals Ministry). But almost always in the NT it refers to service in the Christian Church; whether of the common sort in the local congregation or of an apostolic office and its administration. Here the gift of ministry means the very special ability to serve, minister, aid, help, assist others—to assist them in such a way that they are built up and truly helped (blessed). This is a very practical gift. Many of you have this gift. Do you know someone who

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is always willing and unusually gifted to help others? Thank God most of you help on many occasions. But the person with the gift of ministry has been given the supernatural ability to help. Galatians 6:10; “Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” James 1:27; Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”

It is not clear what kind of service—but it is service. This is practical, observable, critical service. Whether cleaning bathrooms, washing toys, serving in the Children’s ministry. It is service. The person who has this gift usually begins conversations with “I just want to serve.” Some Bible scholars associated this gift with the administration of alms and attendance to bodily needs. Kind of like our Open Arms ministry or benevolence ministry. Sometimes this is translated ‘practical service’ which is contrasted with preaching or teaching which are mentioned separately. Servers are faithful and loyal.

Teaching

Didaskon; the ability to communicate biblical truth to others. The gift of teaching is the supernatural ability to explain, to root and ground the saints in the truth of the Word of God. The Word of God must be proclaimed by prophets and explained by teachers! The teacher has the task of explaining the Scriptures every day, every week, every month. The teacher’s task is to keep people rooted and grounded in the Scripture. Ephesians 4:11; And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers”

“teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matt. 28:20).

Teachers are supposed to be clear thinkers. You would think there is a glut of good Bible teachers. But that is not true. The church desperately needs good, solid Bible teaching. People are walking out the back door of the church almost as fast as they are coming in the front door, all because they are not rooted and grounded in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Exhortation

The ability to offer counsel to others that is comforting and challenging and consistent with the character of God and the Word of God. Instruction that brings wholeness, healing, and obedience in the life of the person encouraged. This is the very special ability to excite, to motivate, advise, encourage, comfort and warn people. The gift often accompanies the evangelist—to stir people to make a decision for Jesus Christ. This gift is used to arouse people so they will get excited, get busy for Jesus. (Ephesians 4:11) “And he gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers”;

The word exhortation translates the word *parakaleo- called alongside to help!* It is one of the titles of the Holy Spirit. The word appears three other times in the book of Romans (12:1; 15:30;

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16:17). In those places the word translates ‘beseech, but can mean ‘comfort’. It combines the ideas of comforting and encouraging. It is a very big word. Preachers motivate people to change. People with an extraordinary gift of exhortation are often involved with discipleship, and Biblical Counseling ministry.

Giving

“... he who gives with liberality (*metadidomi*). Lots of people with this gift would self identify as ‘conservatives in their politics. . .but liberal in their generosity!’ This means the giving of one’s earthly possessions such as money, clothing or food. God gives some people the special ability to make money so they can spread the gospel and the help the poor and build the church. ‘with liberality’ might be translated ‘with simplicity’ it refers—to our motive in giving.

“Those who have this gift are to exercise it without ulterior motives or hidden purposes, simply out of love. This is where Ananias and Sapphira failed. When we give, it is simply to glorify God and to meet the needs of brothers and sisters in Christ in the world” (R. Kent Hughes p. 225).

Givers are generous and trusting. (2 Corinthians 9:7); “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” (Matt. 6:3) “But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,”

Leadership

This is the ability to influence others to cooperate in harmony and unity in accomplishing the goals of God’s kingdom (I think of Nehemiah). “. . .he who leads, with diligence.”

I think the meaning here is a leadership in the church and for the church. I do not think this applies to government or civil leaders—although I think it is possible for a Christian to have this gift and still be able to occupy a government office. I am going to suggest that the gift of leadership has as its first love—the Church. The Greek word is interesting; *proistamenos*—it means ‘the one standing in from’ or we might say *the first in line or what we might call a leader*. One Bible scholar translates this ‘one who presides should be zealous’ or ‘the one who leads others’. Administrators are good organizers and managers.

Mercy

The gift of mercy is the ability to respond to the needs and hurts of others with empathy and compassion. This gift takes many forms; working with the poor, the handicapped, the disabled and those who are ill. “. . .with cheerfulness” (*hilarotes*—where we get our word *Hilary Clinton*—just kidding). The word means just what you think it means—hilarity—gladness, graciousness.

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Some might suggest that there is no place in the Christian life for ‘joking’ or cutting up. It is true that Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But he is also the guy who said, ‘when you fast—don’t look gloomy—like a Pharisee! Jesus had a sense of humor. If you don’t think straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel—or a camel going through the eye of a needle isn’t funny—than you don’t understand Hebrew humor. Real humor is medicine for the soul and the church.

“Faith in God will not get for you everything you may want, but it will get for you what God wants you to have. The unbeliever does not need what he wants: the Christian should want only what he needs” (Vance Havner in *By the Still Waters*; Christianity Today; Vol. 41; No. 7).

Conclusion

“Seven beautiful graces, are they not? Perfumes for the Body of Christ. If Paul’s advice were followed, think how healthy the Church would be. Perhaps God is speaking to you about your gifts. Remember the Church did not give you your gifts—God did. They are his. Use them for his glory!” (R. Kent Hughes; p. 225)