

A Call to Humility and Service

Paul here in chapter 12 exhorting the church in Christian service has commanded God's elect to literally sacrificially place themselves upon the altar of service. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice". And we need to understand that what Paul wrote to the saints at Rome in that first century almost two-thousand years ago is as timely for us as it was for them. As Solomon in his wisdom wrote, "*That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.*" (Eccl 1:9) Therefore, what was required of the saints at Rome is in like manner is required of us who have been called to serve the church here in Northwest Arkansas in our day. God in mercy has given differing gifts and abilities to each one of us that we in humility and love may use those gifts to glorify God and be of service to one-another.

Paul, in these verses is speaking to Christians, not just those Roman Christians almost two thousand years ago, but to Christians today by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit about how we ought to relate to one another. How Christians ought to serve one another. How Christians ought to use their gifts and their abilities and resources to help one another. We, as a community of the saints, being the body of Christ, have been placed in His church to care and encourage and be of service one to the other.

Rom 12:6-8 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.

This morning, as we consider verses 6 through 8, Paul lists seven gifts that God has given to the church for its good. This is not a comprehensive list, there are certainly others of value but these are examples sufficient to instruct us in "how to use our gifts to the glory of God and the well-being of His church".

A. Gifts given for the strengthening of the Body of Christ.

1. The list which Paul gives seems to be those gifts that have been given to those who have been placed in the leadership or rule in the church.
2. First one is "prophecy"
 - a. It is common to think of prophecy as foretelling future events.
 - (1) Prophecy certainly does include that aspect.
 - (2) This was a somewhat common gift in the apostolic church.
 - (3) But, as an ability to speak of future acts of God, or new revelations, it is no longer in use in the church. – *1 Cor 13:8 But where there are prophecies, they will cease*
 - b. But prophecy in Scripture can also mean more than that; it is also simply "a speaking forth the Word of God".
 - (1) This aspect of the gift continues in the church today.
 - (2) But it must be understood, that such speaking in the church must be limited to the revelation of God's written word.

Calvin on Prophecy - But 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 all the oracles of God have been completed in Christ and in his gospel.

- c. Therefore if this gift continues to this day it is simply the ability to pass along direct words of revelation from God's written Word. (And is to be limited to presenting teachings of the written Word of God)
 3. The next gift listed is "ministering" in the church - *or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; (Gk-diacanos)*
 - a. Once again this is not limited to just the office of the deacon.
 - b. We may minister to one-another in several ways.
 - c. The ministering of the word is often spoken of in Scripture.
 - d. For instance the early church appointed deacons that they might minister to the widows in their need, in order that the Apostles might minister the Word of God.

*Acts 6:2,4 It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to **serve tables**. ... "But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the **ministry of the word**."*

- e. Ministering in this sense does include providing for the physical needs of the church, such as widows and the sick.
 - f. This fall out in particular to the office of the deacon, but can and should be engaged in by the church over all. (As exemplified by Dorcas, see Acts 9:36-39)
 - g. This would refer to our Lord when he says, I was sick, in prison and you visited me, I was naked clothed me, hungry and you fed me.
4. The next two I am going to list together for they are similar in nature. Teaching and Exhorting.
- a. This is clearly an ongoing gift in the church. - *Eph 4:11 He Himself gave some to be . . . and some pastors and teachers,*
 - b. The difference between teaching and exhorting may be noted as follows:
 - (1) Teaching would be instructing in the doctrine of the church.
 - (2) Exhorting would be to encourage one to live the Christina life.
 - c. One of the requirements of the elder is that he is to be able to teach.
 - (1) Once again it is to be limited to teaching the Written Word. - *2 Tim 4:2 Preach the word!*
 - (2) The teacher is not to be given to vain philosophies or fables.

1 Tim 1:3-4 That you may charge some that they **teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies**, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

- (3) Limited to that which we have received in Scripture. - *Gal 1:9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

- d. Exhorting includes warning, comforting and encouraging and requires patience.

1 Thess 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

5. Distribution of aid and showing mercy - *he who gives, with liberality . . . who shows mercy, with cheerfulness*
- a. If someone is in need, meet the need. - *ames 2:15-17 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?*
 - b. But make sure it is a viable need. - *2 Thess 3:10 If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.*
 - c. If someone stands in need of mercy – cheer them up. - **comfort the fainthearted**, *uphold the weak, be patient with all.*
6. Finally, lead the flock. - *he who leads, **with diligence**; he.*
- a. Never be neglectful – rise to the occasion.
 - b. Do it as a shepherd, as an example not as a lord over God's people. - *1 Peter 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you . . . not as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*

CONCLUSION: Let us be about our Father's business.

This places a heavy burden upon the leadership of the church for they are responsible for eternal souls.

This places a responsibility upon the flock to take heed to and to pray for those in leadership.

Heb 13:7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.

Heb 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.