

The Seven Gifts for the Believer

Romans 12:3-8

These verses give us the most comprehensive list of gifts for believers for today. There is a list of gifts given in 1 Cor. 12 which has some that are not mentioned here, but one thing to keep in mind is that Romans was written AFTER 1 Corinthians. It shows us that some of the gifts mentioned in 1 Cor. 12 were for that apostolic period alone and were done away with by the time the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write Romans. Ephesians 4 gives a list of gifts to churches, not necessarily to individual believers.

With this in mind we can see by these verses that everyone has been given a gift for today. One gift is no more important than another, it's just that some are more "glamorous" than others, but they are all equally important to the body of Christ, and in particular, to the local church (the local body of Christ).

Verses three (3) through five (5) serve as an approach to the next three verses (six through eight) – a foundation, if you would, upon which the gifts rest.

The first part of verse six (6) serves as an introduction to the gifts themselves:

Romans 12:6

⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...

It is by God's grace and His grace alone that we are given certain gifts. He gave them to us, and He expects us to use them to the best of our ability.

So, where do we fit in? What are the gifts, what do they mean, and how does one know if they have

one? These are all questions that we may ask about this passage. I hope to answer some of these questions in the course of this message, and I trust the Holy Spirit to show each one where they fit in in the local church ministry.

One thing to keep in mind – no matter what your gift is it is to be used for the glory of God. It isn't for our glory, for the church's glory, for the pastor's glory – it is all for Him. When we do all to the glory of God then our effectiveness in service and work will be more profitable than if we did it for ourselves. We will, in effect, be laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven – where they matter most.

1 Corinthians 10:31

³¹ Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Matthew 6:19–21

¹⁹ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

I. PROPHECY – VS. 6B

A. *Prophecy (προφητεία)*

1. "A discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden..." (Thayer)

2. Another author puts it as this: "inspired teaching (Acts 15:32). Anyone speaking with divine authority – whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future – was termed a prophet (Ex. 7:1)" (J-F-B).

Acts 15:32

³² And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

Exodus 7:1

¹ And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.

3. Matthew Henry says this of this gift: "It is not meant of the extraordinary gifts of foretelling things to come, but the ordinary office of preaching the word: so prophesying is taken, 1 Cor. 14:1-3, etc.; 1 Cor. 11:4; 1 Thess. 5:20. The work of the Old Testament prophets was not only to foretell future things, but to warn the people concerning sin and duty, and to be their remembrancers concerning that which they knew before. And thus gospel preachers are prophets, and do indeed, as far as the revelation of the word goes, foretell things to come. Preaching refers to the eternal condition of the children of men, points directly at a future state."

1 Corinthians 14:1-3

¹ Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

² For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no

man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

³ But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

1 Corinthians 11:4

⁴ Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

1 Thessalonians 5:20

²⁰ Despise not prophesyings.

B. This is what we call a modern-day preacher, whether it be a pastor, evangelist, missionary, lay preacher, street preacher, etc.

C. The last phrase of verse 6 dealing with prophecy is in relation to how we look at our gift. If we look at it "according to the proportion of faith" then we won't be puffed up with pride of having a more important gift than someone else.

1. The word for "proportion" - ἀναλογία (from which our English word "analogy" comes – a comparison between two things, typically for the purpose of explanation or clarification) – means the right portion, the measure we use to compare something to – in this case, the measure of comparison is faith. It is the gift of faith that we have been given that is the measure – not someone else's ability to preach or teach or minister, etc.
2. This is only said of this gift. It doesn't mean that being a God-called preacher isn't important, for it is, but it means we're

not to be proud of it and look down on others.

II. MINISTRY – VS. 7A

A. This word (*διακονία*) means, in the context here, the administration of the temporal affairs of the church.

Acts 6:1–3

¹ And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

² Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

³ Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

B. There are those who seem to be blessed with the ability to take care of the "little" things in a church. The placement of this gift second in the list demonstrates its importance. Don't think that cleaning the church, or cooking for a dinner, or helping take care of the needy, or anything else is beneath you. It is a gift just like preaching is.

C. The words "let us wait on our..." means to be occupied with. We need to be found working at whatever God gives us to do.

Matthew 24:45–47

⁴⁵ Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

⁴⁷ Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

D. This is the word from which the word "deacon" comes. Acts 6:7 shows that without this gift being given to some, the church at Jerusalem would not have grown like it did.

Acts 6:7

⁷ And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

III. TEACHING – VS. 7B

A. Διδάσκω – This is shown as being separate from the first one – prophecy – as not to be confused with it.

B. This is a very important gift in that some people have been given the ability to get the point across with ease. Apollos was one such gifted. Although he seems to have been in pastoral leadership within the church at Corinth, he apparently demonstrated the gift of teaching prior to that.

Acts 18:24

²⁴ And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

1 Corinthians 3:6

⁶ I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

IV. EXHORTATION – VS. 8A

A. This word (παρακαλέω) means to call alongside of. It is referring to the emotions more than the previous gift of teaching which referred to the intellect. This gift would be incomplete without teachers and vice versa.

B. The exhorter was one who called for a decision, much like our modern-day invitation, but then it was a specially gifted person that did that. It could be considered to be a supernatural gift (ability) to get people to make a decision for Christ – either in having an impact on a lost person coming to Christ (an effective soul-winner); or in having an impact on a believer in either getting their life right or in keeping their life right.

Acts 11:23

²³ Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

Acts 14:22

²² Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

C. This is not a requirement of the pastor/teacher, as some would have us believe, for it is not mentioned in the list of qualifications for the pastor in 1 Timothy nor Titus. Obviously many pastors have this gift – but not all (I personally don't believe I have this gift, as such).

V. GIVING – VS. 8B

A. This (μεταδίδωμι) was of giving of one's substance, or of one's possessions, money, etc. God has given certain of His people the means, and the heart, and they give all they have to the Lord's work.

1. The word for "giving" comes from two words – one (μετα) denotes association; and the other (διδωμαιν) means to give or share. Together they carry the idea of sharing with someone, imparting something to someone else.

Proverbs 22:9

⁹ He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

Luke 21:1-4

¹ And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

² And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.

³ And he said, **Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:**

⁴ For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

B. This is a gift with a condition, so to speak. It says, "do it with simplicity." That means without self-seeking. We are to do it with sincerity, and not to be noticed.

August H. Francke, the well-known German preacher of the 17th century, founded an orphanage to take care of the homeless children who roamed the streets of Halle. One day when he desperately needed funds to carry on his work, a destitute Christian widow came to his door begging for one gold ducat. Because of his financial situation, he politely but regretfully refused. Disheartened, the woman sat down and began to weep. Moved by her tears, Francke asked her to wait while he went to his room to pray about the matter. Seeking God's guidance, he felt that the Holy Spirit wanted him to grant the request. Trusting the Lord to meet his own pressing needs, he gave her the money. Two mornings later he received a warm letter of thanks from the widow saying that because of his generosity she had asked the Lord to shower the orphanage with gifts. That same day he received 12 ducats from a rich lady and two from a friend in Sweden. He thought he had been amply rewarded, but shortly afterward he was informed that Prince Lodewyk Van Wurtenburg had died, and in his will had directed that 500 gold pieces be given to the orphanage! Francke wept in gratitude. In

sacrificially providing for that needy saint, he had not been impoverished but enriched.

We should always give with pure motives, "hoping for nothing again" (Luke 6:35); yet God does promise, "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack!"

VI. RULETH – VS. 8C

A. This (ἡγοῦσθαι) means "one who presides over, governs, or superintends." This is not the pastor in view here, for the gift of ruling is incorporated into the office of the pastorate.

1 Timothy 3:4-5

⁴ One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

⁵ (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

1 Timothy 5:17

¹⁷ Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

Hebrews 13:7

⁷ Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Hebrews 13:17

¹⁷ Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is

unprofitable for you.

1 Peter 5:2-3

² Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

³ Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

B. This is speaking of a gift to lead others, whomever and wherever that may be, whether in the church, at home, or on the job.

C. It says do it "with diligence" – with earnest purpose. Do it with a purpose in mind, with a goal.

VII. SHEWING MERCY – VS. 8D

A. This (ἐλεέω) means to bring help to the afflicted. In Is. 61:1 it says part of the ministry of the Gospel is to "bind up the broken-hearted." This is that part of the ministry.

B. There are those, it seems, that have a special gift of helping those that are afflicted, whether mentally or physically. This is that gift.

C. The clarifying clause "with cheerfulness" indicates that it won't be an easy job. Those with this gift need to enjoy helping others and do it cheerfully. Nobody that needs help needs to think those helping don't like what they're doing.

Conclusion: How are we using our gifts? Are they being used for the glory of God, or for our glory? What if Jesus comes today – would He find us serving in the gifts He has given us, or would we be ashamed at His coming?

Most of us will not play such a crucial role in history. But we are called to serve Christ faithfully day by day regardless of what we do. John Wesley was asked by a friend, "John, suppose you knew you were going to die by midnight tomorrow. How would you spend your time until then?" I would spend it," Wesley replied, "exactly as I expect to spend it now. I would preach tonight in Gloucester, get up early tomorrow morning and proceed to Tewkesbury, where I would preach in the afternoon. Then I would go to the Martins' house in the evening, talk with Mr. Martin, pray with the family, retire, putting myself in the Father's care, and wake up in heaven."

Whether we labor in the routine of the business world, work with the family in the home, or engage in some specialized occupation, we need to view our daily duties as appointed by God. Whether our impact is large or small, we're part of God's plan. Let's use our time for His glory and the good of others.