

Romans 12 Part Two

Spiritual Gift Introduction

Romans 12

3...I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Many churches hold up certain spiritual gifts as important while marginalizing others. There is no place for arrogance because our spiritual gifts are not a human achievement. Spiritual gifts are something that God does. There is nothing we can do to get a spiritual gift. All we can do is recognize the gift and use it.

4For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

The bible compares the church to a body. The body is a good metaphor. Each part of the human body is important. If a person loses his or her arms or legs they will have a difficult time negotiating life. If a person loses his or her eyes they will have very difficult adjustments. If you break your big toe you realize how important that toe is. Your balance is thrown off and then you walk funny and strain different parts of your legs.

There are no unimportant parts of the body and there are no unimportant persons in the kingdom of Christ because each person has something to contribute to the rest of the members. May God keep us from marginalizing even one person in the body of Christ.

GIFTS ARE FOR THE BODY

I want to ask a question that will give us some perspective. “Who are the spiritual gifts for?” Many Christians are so affected by our culture that

we think of the individual first. We think that if we have a spiritual gift it is my gift to make me feel significant. According to this text the spiritual gifts belong to the body. No single person owns a spiritual gift.

If I have been given a spiritual gift the only way that gift really works is if I give that gift away to other members of the church.

HOW DOES THAT LOOK?

How does that look in practical terms? Let's say I have a gift of encouragement. A gift of encouragement means that when you are about to speak to someone who is down in the dumps the Holy Spirit suddenly gives you just the words to say. When the person with the gift of encouragement speaks those words of encouragement the Holy Spirit will at the same time also work on the heart of the one you are speaking to so that he or she actually feels the love of Jesus coming through your words and acts of kindness. It is more than talent, it is Jesus Christ ministering to a person but somehow through an act of God the speech and love of Jesus comes through you. In our analogy that gift of encouragement belongs to the person that is receiving the encouragement. The gift belongs to the recipient. If you have the spiritual gift you are called to simply hand that gift to the person who needs it. The gift is not for you. It belongs to someone in the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:7 says; "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

So if I say; "hey I can just stay at home and worship God in the woods." That may be convenient for you but you have just ripped off the body of Christ because every Christian is carrying a spiritual gift that can only be used when you are around other people to give it away.

6Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly:

The gifts are to be used. Why is it important to use our spiritual gifts?
JESUS IS VISIBLE THROUGH THE GIFTS.

One of the primary reasons God gave us spiritual gifts is to make Jesus visible to other people. The spiritual gifts are God's way of reproducing the life of Jesus through us and in us. Jesus is the best encourager. So when we are given the spiritual gift of encouragement and we use that gift, the kind of encouragement Jesus has is now visible to the world.

If we have the gift of giving generously it is because Jesus is the most generous person to live. He gave his life for us. When we are generous as the Spirit of God leads us then the generosity of Jesus is now visible to this world. If all of us use our spiritual gifts then a whole bunch of the attributes of Jesus will be on display for the world to see. If only a few of us use our spiritual gifts then only part of Jesus is on display and this community will not see a complete picture of him. The spiritual gifts are one of God's ways of showing off the wonders of Jesus Christ and making him come alive in the body and in the community.

BACKGROUND ON SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The next part of our text gives us specific examples of spiritual gifts. Before we get into that I want to give more background information on the spiritual gifts. In coming weeks we will get to the specifics of each spiritual gift.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE THEME

One of the primary reasons God gave us spiritual gifts is that the gifts are a primary method of spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 4:7-8 - quotes Ps 68:18 "When he ascended on high he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."

This verse is a parallel to a custom used by the Kings of Israel. When the kings of Israel went to war they descended down steep terrain.

After defeating the enemy, they arrived home and ascended, or climbed back up the mountainous terrain toward home. When returning from war they carried in tow or in their train the POWs they freed from the enemy. They also brought back the most precious treasures of the enemy. These are called spoils of war.

Spiritual gifts are spoils of war. At one time the evil prince of this world held us captive. But God came and set us free. And now he has given us spiritual gifts so that we can jump back into the battle and fight against Satan and all of his works. Each time we use our spiritual gifts, we remind Satan of his defeat on the cross. And each time we use our spiritual gift we liberate people out of the prison of sin and spiritual defeat.

Satan is doing everything he can to place a crushing weight of hopelessness on people. He tempts them to live in a way that will destroy their lives and the lives of their families. He accuses people of things they did in their past and tries to get them to hide out of shame. The spiritual gifts are one way in which God liberates prisoners of spiritual war from the grip of Satan.

Matthew 16:18 Jesus said; “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail.”

Jesus will give us everything we need to storm the gates of hell and bring healing and wholeness to his people. How does this work?

Just when you need some kind of insight to share with someone, you get it. Just when you need words to share your faith you get it. Just when you need faith to get through a difficult situation you get it. Just when someone needs the right words to dispel Satan’s lies and philosophies - they

are given. These insights, faith, words, and love are spiritual gifts given to us to defeat the oppression of Satan and remind us of the victory of Jesus.

GIFTS ARE NOT NECESSARILY TALENT

God can use our talent and training to serve his church. But we have to understand that spiritual gifts are not the same as talent and training.

STORY OF THE UKULELES

I remember going to a prayer and worship meeting at North Heights Lutheran Church in the Twin Cities on a Sunday night. Much to my surprise the worship team came up front and they were all holding Ukuleles! I thought to myself, “Oh no, this is going to be like Tiny Tim meets the Apostle Paul. I am in for a rough time!”

But when they began to play - the Holy Spirit fell on that place so thick that everyone was weeping. We were ushered into the presence of God by Ukuleles. The ukulele playing wasn't even good. And their music selection was not contemporary to the audience. Yet the Holy Spirit gifted those men to usher the worshippers into the presence of God.

So it wasn't about how well they played or what instruments they played or what type of music they played, it was all about God investing himself in the music to cause brokenness, confession, holiness, and the defeat of Satan in the lives of those present.

Conversely, I have seen some of the most talented speakers in the world cause people to say; “man that was a great talk.” But no one was broken before God. No one had a true heart change. Satan's lies were not dispelled. Why, because the speaker used talent instead of a spiritual gift supercharged with the power of the Holy Spirit. Yes the people bragged about the speaker but no one's life was changed. And honestly, that is why it

is crucial for those in visible ministry within the church to really stay filled with the Holy Spirit and keep short accounts.

The difference between talent and a spiritual gift is that talent can be explained by natural means. A spiritual gift however, involves the unmistakable presence of God.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE GOD'S CONTROL OF THE CHURCH?

The bible says the Holy Spirit dispenses the gifts. Seminary never made a pastor. Voting never made an Elder, or a Deacon, or a Missionary, or a teacher. And so if you don't have the spiritual gift, don't do the ministry unless there is some very compelling reason to override the principle.

1 Corinthians 12:4 says; *"There are different kinds of gifts but the same Spirit."* Thus we know that the Holy Spirit decides where each person is to serve. The best way to determine who is to serve at which position is to determine what spiritual gifts we have. The spiritual gifts are God's organizational chart of the church. The spiritual gifts are God's constitution and God's election of officers. If our election of officers and approval of ministry teams do not match what God has decided then we are not building the church we are building a religious business.

AUDIENCE OR ARMY –

GOD WILL USE YOU TO MANAGE HIS CHURCH

There are two approaches to church. In one approach you come to church and you watch a guy do a talk and sing to some music and that is the sum total of church. But in a biblical view everyone gets to contribute to the church, everyone has something important to do in the church, and no one sits on the bench or plays junior varsity! There is no audience, there is only an army of people who are used by God in various ways to defeat Satan and get the message of Jesus out to the world. Do you want to be part of an

audience or do you want to be part of God's army? Do you want to sit and watch our enemy fire at will upon the souls of fellow church members and citizens of this town, or do you want to fight back with the spiritual power that God has given us through the spiritual gifts?

If you want to see more of Jesus on display and you want to see the defeat of our enemy, then grab a hold of these words and ask God to show you how they apply to you as an individual and all of us as a church.

TAKE IT HOME

1. Do you know what your spiritual gifts are?
2. If not, are you willing to step out in faith and try different things until you find your gift; and are you willing to pray that God would show you in what area he wants you to serve Him?
3. Have you thought about the fact that you are either a part of the audience or part of the army?
4. Will you allow God to manage His church and defeat the enemy by following God's pattern for the church more than any worldly pattern we can come up with in the flesh?