

January 20, 2014

## The Imperative of Spiritual Gifts

Romans 12:7-8 (NASB), ***“if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy with cheerfulness.”***

Once a person has repented of their sins and placed their trust in Jesus Christ they begin to walk with Him and a large part of that walk is serving Him. How do we serve Him? In a variety of ways; once we have repented and believed in Him the Holy Spirit indwells in us and begins working in our lives and part of that work is the giving of spiritual gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 the Apostle Paul lists some of these spiritual gifts: ***“And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.”***

In today’s passage here in Romans 12 Paul encourages us his readers to use these gifts and not to ignore them. Trust me it is very easy to ignore our gifts and even in some ways hope that they will go away. Paul lists for us six spiritual gifts and I don’t necessarily believe that they are listed in order of importance. All of these gifts if used properly edify and grow the kingdom of God.

The first gift is found in verse 7ab, ***“if service, in his serving...”*** The word ***“serving”*** is the Greek word *diakonia* which is the Greek word from which we get our word deacon. It is translated to mean “ministry and those who serve.” This is similar to the gift of “helps” that Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 12:28. I believe that to some extent all us are to minister in service, we are to help others who are in need both spiritually and physically. This also means that if you are a deacon in your church you are primarily to be a servant and to serve in whatever way you are needed.

The second gift is that of teaching. Verse 7cd says, ***“or he who teaches, in his teaching...”*** The word teaching is translated to mean “instruction in doctrine.” The gift of teaching is the “ability to interpret, clarify, systematize, and explain the word of God.” The pastor must have this gift; I believe firmly that it is a prerequisite for serving as a pastor. 1 Timothy 3:2 says, ***“An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach...”*** In 1 Timothy 4:16 Paul exhorts Timothy with these words: ***“Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”*** The gift of teaching isn’t limited only to pastors, laymen can have this gift as well.

The third gift is given at the beginning of verse 8, ***“on he who exhorts, in his exhortation...”*** The Greek word for ***“exhortation”*** is *paraklesis* and it is translated to also mean “to encourage, comfort.” If one has the gift of exhortation they are able to effectively call others to obey and follow God’s truth. To exhort is to admonish and correct and in fact exhortation is similar to teaching but it is also very different. Preaching has a large dose of exhortation involved in it. 2 Timothy 4:2 says, ***“preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”*** I believe this combined with the gift of teaching are the dual gifts that a pastor needs to have. In fact I will argue that teaching and exhorting or preaching are the most important things that a pastor does.

We exhort when we positively encourage and comfort and strengthen struggling believers. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, ***“and let us 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.”***

The next gift that Paul enumerates is that of giving. He writes in verse 8ef, ***“he who gives, with liberality...”*** The word ***“gives”*** means to “give a share of.” This denotes sacrificial sharing and the giving of one’s resources and of one’s self to meet the needs of others. Those with the gift of giving or generosity are to give with an open and sincere generosity. Matthew 6:2 says, ***“So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”*** In Acts 2:44 we see this in action: ***“And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common.”*** Some people in the church have been given the ability to give of their time and some have been given the ability (the gift) to give from their resources. Both are part of the gift of giving or generosity.

The next gift is the gift of leadership. Verse 8gh says, ***“he who leads, with diligence...”*** The word ***“leads”*** is translated to mean “to rule.” Paul also calls this gift ***“administrations”*** in 1 Corinthians 12:28. This word as it is used here means “to guide” and it was used to describe the person who steered a ship. 1 Timothy 5:17 says, ***“The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.”*** The pastor must exercise this gift but it is not just limited to the pastor, there are many laymen who have been gifted to lead others and do so very well.

The last gift is that of mercy. This is one who actively shows sympathy and sensitivity to those who are suffering and are sorrowful. This person has the ability and the resources to help lesson others suffering and afflictions. According to John MacArthur this gift often accompanies the gift of exhortation. They are to have an attitude of ***“cheerfulness”*** when they use their gift. This is to ensure that this gift is a genuine help and not a discouraging “commiseration” in the circumstances of those who are suffering.

All of us who have repented of our sins and believed in Jesus Christ as our Savior have been given some spiritual gifts in order to edify the church and advance the gospel. I want to encourage all of us to be in prayer about what our gifts are and to then use those gifts to bring honor and glory to our Lord’s name.