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Sermon Notes

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## **God's Pleasing Will for You: Spiritual Gifts, Part 1**

**Romans 12:3-8**

### **Fearfully and Wonderfully Made**

At this moment the various specialized cells in your body are all doing their work... your heart cells are pumping blood cells to other cells to give them the oxygen and nutrients you need to stay alive; your hearing cells are doing their various specialized functions to take the sounds you are hearing and report them to the brain; your seeing cells are sensitive to light and color and are sending the proper signals to the brain; your lungs are filling with air, your liver is purifying your blood; your bones are providing the framework for all those soft organs to maintain their proper places in the body; your sweat glands are controlling your body temperature; your body systems are all functioning together to enable you to exist here

In the same manner God has put the Church together with amazing specialization... and it is called Spiritual Gifts

### **The Second Greatest Tragedy**

- The Greatest Tragedy is Clear: Losing Your Soul

***Matthew 16:26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?***

- The Second Greatest Tragedy: Wasting Your Life

God has given to each of us a precious gift of His grace... TIME... time to serve Him and serve others; to advance the Kingdom of God by our efforts through His Spirit

BUT I am convinced that the devil has persuaded many Christians to settle for mediocrity in serving God... he has duped us into WASTING OUR LIVES here on earth

Time is flying by... what are you investing your time in?

Why did God leave you here on earth? What are you contributing to the advance of Christ's Kingdom?

Spiritual gift ministry is the way God gave us to make the most of every precious moment on earth

Here we come to the most vital study our church has heard yet in Romans, when it comes to what WE MUST CHANGE if we are to be maximally effective for Christ

## I. What Are Spiritual Gifts and Why Are They Important?

### A. Key Doctrine in the New Testament

#### 1. Romans 12

- a. At a critical place in the greatest epistle ever written
- b. The Apostle Paul has given us eleven chapters of extraordinary doctrine... the clearest and deepest description of the gospel in history
- c. He completes it with a magnificent doxology
- d. Then he begins at last to tell us how we should live our daily lives
- e. The first and greatest practical daily life command he gives is to worship God by presenting him our bodies, minds and wills
- f. NEXT, he tells us about spiritual gifts
- g. He had begun the entire epistle by speaking of spiritual gifts

***Romans 1:11-12 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong-- <sup>12</sup> that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.***

- h. But here in Romans 12, in the practical application of the gospel, he gives us spiritual gifts right after telling us to present our souls, bodies, minds, and wills to God as spiritual sacrifices
- i. Therefore, spiritual gifts are incredibly important

#### 2. Ephesians 4

- a. After three chapters of deep doctrine, Paul gets to the issue of living a life worthy of the calling you have received
- b. He begins with Christian unity
- c. BUT THEN he goes to Christian diversity... specifically the issue of spiritual gifts

***Ephesians 4:7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.***

The “grace” Paul is talking about is a special grace measured out to each Christian... the matter of spiritual gifts

***Ephesians 4:11-13 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.***

Paul goes on to tell us that, only as each Christian uses his/her spiritual gifts will the Body of Christ reach full maturity

***Ephesians 4:16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.***

### 3. 1 Corinthians 12-14

- a. Dealing with a very gifted and talented church, Paul has to deal with problem after problem
- b. The core of the issue is that of human boasting... boasting by humans about humans
- c. The Corinthians were also boasting in their spiritual gifts... especially the showy gift of tongues
- d. So, for three magnificent chapters, Paul deals with the proper use of spiritual gifts in the body of Christ
- e. He lays out the general doctrine of spiritual gifts using the same analogy he uses here, that of the body... one body with many members, many cells... unity and diversity, all working together to achieve the goal of God
- f. At the center of this development, Paul gave the timeless “love chapter” used frequently at weddings, 1 Corinthians 13; but in actuality, its purpose originally was to teach the Corinthians HOW the spiritual gifts were to be used... it was more important to have love than the most glorious spiritual gifts

***1 Corinthians 13:1-3 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.***

Three gifts: tongues, prophecy, and giving: all put in their place UNDER the matter of LOVE

#### 4. 1 Peter 4

- a. Peter is writing to the suffering churches in the Gentile world
- b. In the middle of all the crucial advice he gives suffering Christians, he speaks of spiritual gifts

***1 Peter 4:10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.***

#### 5. Throughout the Book of Acts

- a. In chapter after chapter, we are seeing the spiritual gifts of the church at work
- b. We see the gifted apostolic ministries of Peter, John, and Paul
- c. We see the spiritual gifts of Stephen and Philip
- d. We see the gift of prophecy in Agabus, and of encouragement in Barnabas
- e. We see the gifts of the church at Antioch, and also the growing churches in Asia Minor and Greece
- f. The whole book of Acts is a display of the spiritual gifts

Summary: From Romans, Ephesians, Corinthians, Peter, Acts we see that Spiritual Gifts are a VITAL FORCE in God's plan for the world... not some minor extra or useless appendix

### B. Definition of Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given differently to each one of us by the special grace of God through Christ and through the Holy Spirit that God uses to build up the Body of Christ. These special abilities include such things as these listed here in verses 6-8

***vs. 6-8 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. <sup>7</sup> If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.***

Corinthians adds to the list, as does Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4. Each of the lists is different, suggesting that there never will be a final and exhaustive list of spiritual gifts given anywhere. A composite list would look like this:

**PROPHECY, SERVICE, TEACHING, ENCOURAGEMENT, GIVING, LEADERSHIP, MERCY, EVANGELISM, PASTORING, HOSPITALITY, WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE, FAITH, HEALING, MIRACLES, DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN SPIRITS, SPEAKING IN TONGUES, INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES**

Here in Romans 12:

**prophecy**, [one interpretation: speaking as a prophet the inerrant word of God directly; another is preaching/proclaiming]

**serving**, [finding various needs, frequently of a physical nature and doing them; **HELPING**]

**teaching**, [understanding, interpreting, unfolding and explaining the written word of God, applying it effectively to the hearers]

**encouraging**, [giving energy and strength to brothers and sisters so they will not falter or grow weary in doing good, or so they will not drift into sin; key words: advising, pleading, encouraging, exhorting, warning, strengthening, comforting]

**contributing to the needs of others**, [giving money and other material possessions to support brothers and sisters in their needs]

**leadership**, [guiding ministries and leading them; making discerning decisions; rallying and motivating people to support the direction God is leading the church]

**mercy**, [actively showing sympathy for someone in suffering and sorrow; specially gifted to alleviate sorrow]

I believe that these are just meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive... but you can see from this what spiritual gifts are

### C. Grace from God

1. Paul speaks of the grace God gave Him

***Romans 12:3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you***

2. He means His spiritual gift ministry... being an apostle
3. He uses this language frequently

***Romans 12:6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.***

***Ephesians 3:7-8 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ***

***Ephesians 4:7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it***

***1 Corinthians 15:9-10 I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-- yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.***

Peter also speaks of spiritual gifts as GRACE from God

***1 Peter 4:10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.***

4. Why is it called grace???

a. It is grace from God to us... that we not waste our lives

God could have simply saved us from hell, given us a place in heaven and, other than that, told us to stay out of His way!

“Here is your certificate entitling you to an eternal place in the heavenly Kingdom of Christ... now stay over there, and keep out of the way.”

Instead, God wants us to serve Him, to use our spiritual gifts in service to others

WHY? Because He loves US and wants to give us the JOY of serving Him in some vital way

b. It is grace from God THROUGH US to others

God wants to give other people grace through us... we are channels, pipelines of God's wonderful grace!!

SO... spiritual gifts are called “grace from God”

And Paul is using his spiritual gift of apostleship here and now, in writing Romans 12:3-8 explaining spiritual gifts to us

***Romans 12:3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you, do not think of yourself more highly than you ought...***

D. Paul's Body Analogy

1. Used here in Romans 12

**vs. 4-6** *Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,<sup>5</sup> so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.<sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.*

2. More developed in 1 Corinthians 12

**1 Corinthians 12:12** *The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.*

**1 Corinthians 12:14-20** *Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.<sup>15</sup> If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.<sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.<sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?<sup>18</sup> But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.<sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be?<sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body.*

3. Basic ideas

- a. One body
- b. Many members
- c. Members have different functions
- d. Members arranged as God wants them to be
- e. All members belong equally to the body
- f. All members belong to each other
- g. No member is more important than any other
- h. No member is useless
- i. As members do their function, they build the Body up to full maturity

E. Significance for Each of Us

1. Each one of us is essential to the work of Christ on the earth
2. These gifts are not really ours, but belong to Christ
3. Therefore we are STEWARDS of spiritual gifts and will give Christ a detailed account of how we have used our gifts in life

4. We must use them for His glory
5. We have work to do!!!

#### F. Significance for FBC

1. I do not believe that everyone of us is using our spiritual gifts as we ought to be
2. One of the most pressing issues at FBC is this: does every member have a spiritual gift ministry? Are we using our gifts??
3. FBC is in need of a movement of the Spirit of God empowering and motivating us to serve Him with our gifts

Some with the gifts of administration are withholding their gifts

Some with the gifts of service are withholding their gifts

Some with the gifts of encouragement are withholding their gifts

Now, more than ever before, it is time for us to step up and use our gifts

You need to USE your gifts!!!

Summary: Spiritual gifts are vital... spiritual gifts are GRACE... we must use our gifts

Now what? HOW DO WE DO IT?

### **Three key steps: Discover, Develop, Use**

## II. How Do We Discover Our Spiritual Gifts?

### A. What You Can Do For Yourself

1. Step One: Understand God Has a Plan for Your Life

***Romans 12:2 Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.***

I BELIEVE WITH ALL MY HEART SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE AT THE CORE OF THIS WILL FOR US

Look at the connection between verse 2 and 3:



***Romans 12:2-5 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will. <sup>3</sup> For by the grace given me I say to every one of you:***

And then he talks about spiritual gifts!!!

In other words, the word “for” connects the phrase “good, pleasing, and perfect will” to the concept of thinking about yourself properly, especially concerning SPIRITUAL GIFTS

WHAT IS GOD’S WILL FOR MY LIFE????

Illus. Ron Halbrooks, Henry Blackaby, **Experiencing God**: “We live in a shockingly Biblically illiterate age... young Christians are actually surprised to find out that the Bible has any wisdom or guidance for them in answering the question ‘What is God’s will for my life?’”

Most people ask “What is God’s will for my life?” in terms of “Who should I marry?” or “How many children should we have?” or “What career should I choose?” or “What job should I take?” “What college should I go to?” “Where should I live?”

As important as each of these questions are, the issue of spiritual gift ministry seems to be even more important to Paul

**BOTTOM LINE: If you don’t want to waste your life, please discover, develop, and use your spiritual gifts!!! That is God’s “good, pleasing, and perfect will” for you**

## 2. Step Two: Present Yourself as a Living Sacrifice

- a. Only by saying to God “My body is your to command as you will” will you be ready to discover, develop, and use your spiritual gifts
- b. You must do this daily, as we’ve said

## 3. Step Three: Be Transformed by Renewing by Your Mind

- a. Only by presenting your mind to the transforming power of the Scripture will you be able to discern God’s will for you and **EMBRACE IT GLADLY**
- b. You must be daily in the word of God in order to discover, develop, and use your gifts

## 4. Step Four: Think About Yourself Properly

***Romans 12:3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.***

a. Think about yourself

- i) You have to stop and take the time to ponder what God has put in you
- ii) You have to do this in prayer, with a mind enlightened by Scripture
- iii) You may think, “This is a selfish thing to do”... but here Paul actually commands you to do it!!
- iv) THINK ABOUT YOURSELF... “Who am I, Lord? Who have you made me to be??”

b. With humility

- i) Not more highly than you ought to... we all tend toward pride
- ii) AND when you see God begin to use you in an amazing way, you’re going to be praised and encouraged by other grateful Christians
- iii) Don’t think too highly of yourself
- iv) BUT don’t think too lowly of yourself either... saying “My little gifts could never make a difference in the Kingdom of Christ”

c. With sober judgment

George MacDonald: “A man ought to try to look at his own work as if it were none of his, but not as with the eyes of other people. That is an impossibility, and the attempt a bewilderment. It is with his own eyes he must look, with his own judgment he must judge. The only effort is to get it set far away enough from him to be able to use his own eyes and his own judgment upon it.” *The Seaboard Parish, Chapter 27*

C.S. Lewis in  *Screwtape Letters*:

“Thousands of humans have been brought to think that humility means pretty women trying to believe that they are ugly, and clever men trying to believe they are fools. [God] wants to bring the man to a state of mind in which he could design the best cathedral in the world, and know it to be the best, and rejoice in the fact, without being any more (or less) or otherwise glad at having done it than he would be if it had been done by another. [God] wants him, in the end, to be so free from any bias in his own favor that he can rejoice in his own talents as frankly and gratefully as in his neighbor’s talents.” (Chapter 14)

The key concept here is that all of your spiritual gifts are just that, GIFTS from God... He gave them to you as a stewardship... and someday God will call you to account for what He gave you

***1 Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?***

You are supposed to assess your work objectively, with sober judgment... see what God has put in you, and what He expects of you

Christ is the ultimate fruit inspector, and He will judge all of our works on Judgment Day... but He is eager to give you a sober assessment of your works now so you can discern your spiritual gifts

i) “sober judgment” is the way you should assess your life

ii) With God’s help, you will discern what gifts He has given you

d. By the measure of your faith

i) “according to the measure of faith” means recognizing by faith what God has put in you

ii) Not everyone has the same measure of faith or the same measure of spiritual gifts

iii) Not all preachers equal each other in gifts, nor do all givers, or encouragers or administrators etc.

5. Step Five: Serve God Constantly in Common Ways

a. There are some basic duties in the Christian life... all of us must pray, witness, give our tithes and offerings, encourage and help other believers

b. BUT as we’re doing these things, we are testing what our gifts are

c. You need to get out and SERVE... and do it consistently

Illus. Balsa wood airplanes with different wing settings

d. Also... part of this is understanding the different possibilities for ministries and roles... look at the various lists of spiritual gifts and start doing some of them

6. Step Six: Look for the Validation of the Body of Christ

a. Spiritual gifts are confirmed (and denied) by the whole Body of Christ

b. As they are, then the individual Christian has a sense of what God wants them to do

c. If someone thinks they have the gift of administration, and every time they run an event or a ministry, the thing runs smoothly, details are thought of, phone calls made in a timely fashion, little things and big things are addressed wisely and accurately, then the Body of Christ will praise that individual and encourage that gift

- d. BUT if they think they have the gift of administration and things tend to fall apart whenever they are in charge of them, then it is the Body's responsibility to tell the truth to the individual... for their good as well as the good of the Body... why should they waste their time doing something that is not their gift?
- e. So also with teaching, encouragement, giving, etc.

Summary: DISCOVERING your spiritual gifts

What you can do for yourself individually?

- Step One: Understand God Has a Plan for Your Life
- Step Two: Present Yourself as a Living Sacrifice
- Step Three: Be Transformed by Renewing by Your Mind
- Step Four: Think About Yourself Properly
- Step Five: Serve God Constantly in Common Ways
- Step Six: Look for the Validation of the Body of Christ

## B. What You Can Do For Others

Key concept: Spiritual gifts are discovered CORPORATELY as well as individually

As the Body of Christ embraces someone's gifts, they are confirmed in that person

So, we need to help OTHER PEOPLE discover their spiritual gifts

Romans 12:3 says we should think about ourselves soberly

Hebrews 10:24 says we should think about others!!!

***Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works***

1. Think about them: "What are their spiritual gifts?"
  - a. Notice Hebrews 10:24 says we should CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER
  - b. THINK ABOUT THEM
  - c. Amazing... the first step for us discovering our own spiritual gifts is to THINK ABOUT OURSELVES
  - d. Hebrews 10:24-25 says we should consider each other

2. Pray about them: “What are their spiritual gifts?”
3. Spur them on: “Use your spiritual gifts”
4. Encourage them: “I am so blessed by your spiritual gifts!”

***Hebrews 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.***

5. Tell them the truth: “Your spiritual gifts are in another place!”

Don't flatter someone who doesn't really have the gift of teaching that they do... they will be wasting their time and that of the Body of Christ

6. Start in your small groups... take a person and begin praying for that person this week asking “What is his/her spiritual gift?”

IF AFTER A WEEK YOU HAVE NO ANSWER, one of two scenarios... 1) You don't know them very well at all; 2) They aren't really serving Christ in any open way

Help them find their true calling

We're all in this together!!

Don't be self-focused alone...

YES you need to consider yourself, as Paul said, in order to discover your own spiritual gifts

BUT you need the Body of Christ to validate those gifts

Therefore, let's do that for others, while we need them to do that for us

## **Conclusion:**

### **DISCOVER DEVELOP USE**

This morning we have spoken about spiritual gifts... these are for people who have already committed their lives to Christ

**COME TO CHRIST FOR THE GIFT OF SALVATION FIRST!!**

Remember the greatest danger is to lose your soul

Secondly... assess your life and ministry... do you understand spiritual gifts? DO you know what you gifts are? Are you developing them and using them?