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Sermon Notes

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God's Pleasing Will for You: Spiritual Gifts, Part 2

Romans 12:3-8

Greek mythology describes the way the ancient city of Athens got its name

Two deities were competing for the right to be the protector of the city... the human king, Kekrops, decided that whichever deity gave the city the most valuable gift would be chosen as the patron of the city

The god of the sea, Poseidon, took his powerful trident and struck the top of the hill that became later known as the Acropolis, and a fresh water spring bubbled forth. The people were impressed with this valuable gift

Until Athena, the goddess of wisdom gave her gift. She had chosen wisely... a new kind of tree they had never seen before... the olive tree. Its fruit was nutritious and delicious for eating; its pressed oil useful for burning in lamps; and its wood excellent for construction. It could multiply into groves which grew abundantly in that climate... and thus it would provide a lucrative cash crop in trade with other nations. Athena's gift won, and the city was named Athens in her honor

Christ's gifts to us, however, are infinitely more valuable than those given by these fake man-made deities

I could speak of the infinite gift of salvation that Christ bought with His blood:

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Or of the gift of adoption or the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit... or the gift of a future inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven

But today, for the second week, I want to speak of a gift from God to men more wisely chosen than Athena's gift of the olive tree... it is the gift of an indispensable role in the advance of the Kingdom of Christ... the gift of being able to invest our time and efforts in something that will last for eternity

It is also the gift of being equipped for the good works God has planned for us to do

SPIRITUAL GIFTS... not the olive tree to us, but that we would ourselves become as fruitful as the olive tree

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

I. What Are Spiritual Gifts?

A. Key Doctrine in the New Testament

1. Romans 12
2. Ephesians 4
3. 1 Corinthians 12-14
4. 1 Peter 4
5. Throughout the Book of Acts

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. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ 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.

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

C. Grace from God

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, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.

2. More developed in 1 Corinthians 12
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: We are stewards who will give an account
- F. Significance for FBC: We need to use our gifts better to be what God wants us to be

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
 2. Step Two: Present Yourself as a Living Sacrifice
 3. Step Three: Be Renewed by Transforming Your Mind
 4. Step Four: Think About Yourself Properly
 5. Step Five: Serve God Constantly in Common Ways
 6. Step Six: Look for the Validation of the Body of Christ
- B. What You Can Do For 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?”
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!”

III. How Should I Develop My Spiritual Gifts?

A. Spiritual Gifts Need to Be Developed

Perhaps the most overwhelmingly talented musical genius in history was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. At the age of five he was already beginning to compose minuets. At the age of six, he was traveling all over Europe with his father giving concerts for kings and archbishops. But he was also fanatically serious about developing his God-given talent... he devoted himself to fourteen hours a day of practice on the piano

Perhaps the most overwhelmingly talented sculptor, painter and architect in the history of Europe, Michelangelo had a seemingly supernatural ability to make a piece of marble come seemingly to life, to make mere brushstrokes of paint on a ceiling breathe a scene of astounding power as in the Sistene Chapel... But he was also fanatically devoted to developing his craft. He wrote extensively on the theory and practice of art and design, and was constantly studying how to make his God-given gift more glorying to the God who gave it.

Charles Spurgeon was perhaps the most naturally talented preacher in history. Possessed of an astounding eloquence, a powerful voice and a remarkable intellect, he was preaching to huge crowds of thousands before he twentieth birthday. But he never stopped developing his craft, studying the techniques of preaching... of powerfully reaching the hearts of men and women with the life-changing gospel. He developed his gift to a sharper edge more and more with each passing year.

Over and over again in history, we have seen incredibly talented men and women take those gifts and develop them to the glory of God... da Vinci's Renaissance knowledge

But I have also seen God-given talents go wasted...

When I was a student at MIT, I studied with some of the best and brightest students in the country. But I noticed that there were some lazy geniuses who had the ability to coast and did so... they got by, even with excellent grades... but their gift was not fully developed

1. Spiritual gifts do not come fully developed
2. The lesson of Paul's advice to Timothy in several places is clear: you must develop your spiritual gifts to full maturity

2 Timothy 1:6 ⁶ *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

1 Timothy 4:14-16 *Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. ¹⁶ Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers*

3. The work and effort and zeal involved is a large measure of the worship we give to God in using our gifts
4. It also is in complete harmony with God's usual way of dealing with us... all things grow and develop

B. We Develop Them by Using Them

1. More on this in a moment, but it stands to reason
2. The more you use something the better you get at it

C. We Develop Them by Studying Them

1. Each gift ministry has its secrets of the trade...
2. Each ministry requires careful study
3. Prime example is Timothy's gift of teaching

2 Timothy 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

4. So also the gift of prophecy here in Romans 12

^{ESV} **Romans 12:6** *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith*

- a. Interesting expression
- b. Prophecy was an immediate revelation of the word of God directly to a situation

- c. The “analogy of faith” is the understanding that everything a prophet said had to be consistent with the already revealed Christian faith called “the faith”
- d. Thus all prophecies had to be weighed, assessed, balanced to be sure that they fit into the growing body of doctrine known as “the faith”

1 Thessalonians 5:20-22 do not treat prophecies with contempt. ²¹ Test everything. Hold on to the good. ²² Avoid every kind of evil.

1 Corinthians 14:29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.

1 John 4:1-3 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.

- e. Everything God says is perfect, and perfectly consistent with everything else He has revealed
- f. Therefore, it was the job of the prophets and the pastor-teachers to filter all prophecies to be sure they were consistent with the faith
- g. This is the development required for the use of that gift

5. Other gifts also require careful study

- a. Those with the gift of administration still need to learn the best way to organize ministries and to lead people winsomely
- b. Those with the gift of giving still need to study the best way to earn money and the best way to give it away

Illus. Gift of giving... Randy Alcorn *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*... small group; DVD of giving warriors from history... R.G. LeTourneau

R.G. LeTourneau (1888-1969) was the father of the American earth moving industry, inventing and developing HUGE machines for moving earth... mostly responsible for equipping the Allied invasion of Normandy with machinery during World War II. His life was changed by the realization that he could serve God as a businessman. LeTourneau’s first business went bankrupt, sending him into debt by \$5,000, a large sum in his day. However, a pastor friend told him that God needed businessmen as well as pastors. Eventually he found a construction job and became successful. Amidst his success, LeTourneau remembered God’s faithfulness and gave 90 percent of his earnings to Christian endeavors. LeTourneau lived by the statement, “If you’re not serving the Lord, it proves you don’t love him; if you don’t love him, it proves you don’t know him.”

Someone with the gift of giving DEVELOPS his/her own gift by studying how others have done it

- c. Those with the gift of hospitality would still need to study how to minister to people of different cultures, perhaps, or with different lavish display of welcome and greeting... they can learn from some women, perhaps, who have been making guests feel at home for decades

D. We Develop Them by Submitting to the Input of Others

1. We should submit our ministries to more skilled and more mature Christians who also have those same gifts
2. We should submit our ministries to the Body as a whole for help in discerning the best ways to grow

Bottom line: we must DEVELOP our spiritual gifts so we become even more skillful at them

IV. How Should I Use My Spiritual Gifts?

A. Use Them Consistently

Romans 12:6-8 If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ 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.

1. The central point Paul is making about spiritual gifts is that we MUST use them
2. We need to get out there are trade with the talents that have been given to us
3. Think about the parable of the talents

Matthew 25:15-18 To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

4. The basic idea is that spiritual gifts are given as a stewardship from God and He expects you to use them

5. There will come a time when He will ask for them back... WITH INTEREST
6. The extra is what you did with the gift while you had it
7. Use them knowing that it is only as each of us uses our gifts that the whole church can grow

B. Use Them in a Focused Way

1. Spiritual gifts should dictate the way you spend much of your ministry time
2. If your gift is teaching, you should TEACH
3. If your gift is encouraging, you should ENCOURAGE
4. The special gifting and calling of God in your life should be the majority of your ministry time
5. Now, this doesn't mean you can't also do those things all Christians are commanded to do
 - a. Everyone is commanded to be a witness for Christ... so no one should say "I do not have the gift of evangelism, so I won't ever witness for Christ"
 - b. Every Christian has faith, but not all Christians have the "gift of faith"
 - c. Every Christian should give, but not all Christians have the gift of giving
6. All I'm saying is that the "home base" of your life of ministry for Christ should be your spiritual gifts

C. Use Them Skillfully

1. Paul uses many adverbs or descriptive phrase here to tell the Roman Christians HOW they are to use them
2. Look at some of these words

Romans 12:6-9 If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ 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. ⁹ Love must be sincere.

- a. Prophecy: "let him use it in proportion to the faith"
- b. Giving: "let him give generously"
- c. Leadership: "let him govern diligently"

d. Mercy: “let him do it cheerfully”

3. As we already said in the developing section, IT MATTER HOW YOU DO YOUR GIFT MINISTRY

4. God calls on us to be skillful ministers to each other for His glory

D. Use Them Lovingly

1. At the root of all this is the idea of LOVE

a. The gift of mercy is that of alleviating people’s suffering by gentleness and kindness

b. BUT if its not done cheerfully, the gift of mercy can turn out to be a curse

c. There has to be a sense of the loving tender mercy of Christ flowing through this person

2. There should be a sense of lavish outpouring of these gifts, a sense that the Spirit is using you in a wonderful way to bless the Body of Christ

3. There should be a sense of unity in the Spiritual Gifts similar to that of the marital union between a husband and wife

Romans 12:5 in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

a. “each member belongs to all the others” means that my gift of teaching/preaching really doesn’t belong to me alone, but to the church as a whole

b. Therefore, I can’t withhold it from the church, because it belongs to the others

c. Paul spoke similarly about marriage and the physical union there is between the husband and wife

1 Corinthians 7:4-5 The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. ⁵ Do not deprive each other

d. There is a common sharing of the spiritual gifts... YOUR GIFT BELONGS TO GOD WHO GAVE IT AND TO THE CHURCH FOR WHOM HE GAVE IT

e. We do not have the right to withhold it

f. It really is an issue of love!!!

4. This is why Paul concludes this whole section with this command

Vs. 9 “Love must be sincere.”

- a. In other words, the use of all these spiritual gifts should be an exercise in genuine love
 - b. “Sincere” = lit. “unhypocritical”; genuine, unfeigned, true, what it seems to be
5. This is also why Paul wrote all of 1 Corinthians 13... because in the use of Spiritual Gifts, there must be a sense of love toward the brothers and sister

1 Corinthians 13:1 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. ² 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. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.

V. Application

A. Discover: Have You Discovered Your Spiritual Gifts?

1. Have you learned from Scripture what spiritual gifts are?
2. Have you learned from example, from watching others, how spiritual gifts can and should function?
3. Have you followed the steps Paul gave in Romans 12 to discerning and approving God’s good, pleasing and perfect will for you?
4. Do you have a strong sense of what God is calling you to devote yourself to?
5. Have you submitted to the insights and guidance of the Body of Christ, of other Christians who can help you determine how God has gifted you?
6. If you haven’t yet discovered your gifts, are you involved in a wide array of ministries, serving in many different ways so that your gifts can float to the surface and be discovered?

B. Develop

1. If you know what your gifts are, are you studying them carefully to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who doesn't need to be ashamed?
2. Are you fanning your gifts into a flame? Can people see your progress as a teacher or encourager or giver or leader or prayer warrior?
3. Are you developing your gifts to a honed, gleaming sharp edge so you can be maximally useful to the master?

C. Use

1. The major thrust of Romans 12 is USE YOUR GIFTS!!! Don't hide them in the ground like the lazy servant hid his talent!
2. If your gift is teaching, then TEACH... if your gift is serving, the SERVE... of your gift is giving, GIVE... if your gift is encouragement, ENCOURAGE
3. Be active trading with your talents... multiply them and make more and more for the Kingdom

HOST Ministry

We need a variety of gifted people to help us organize a new ministry to visitors at our church

God continues to give us a steady stream of visitors... we need to do everything we can to welcome them... to make them feel at home

We need people with the gift of leadership and administration to help look after the details

We need people with the gift of hospitality to extend the warm welcome we're trying to extend

We need people with the gift of evangelism to be able to share the gospel with visitors

We need people with the gift of service to do their serving in a hundred invisible ways

Please be in prayer about how you can get involved and be watching for volunteer meetings... we need your gifts!!!