

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 2/4/94 PM
Romans 12:6-8 "You and Your Spiritual Gift"

Intro: One of the intriguing things to me about the church is diversity. We're all different! We look different. We have different tastes and interests.

Illust:

We also have different gifts--spiritual gifts.

One of the most exciting studies we have done at WBC in the past 6 years (from my perspective!) was a series we did 5 years ago, on Spiritual Gifts. It's thrilling to discover the truth that God has blessed every child of His with a spiritual gift (or gifts). We are indeed stewards of this divine gift. What God gives us, He expects us to use, for His glory.

When we accept this fact, and when we use our God-given deposit, the results are wonderful. God is honored. And we experience great joy. That's why that previous study was so encouraging to me. It was fantastic to watch individuals learn that God had gifted them! And then to see them step out in faith and attempt new ministries. We learned that every member is a potential minister in the church. In fact, out of that study we developed a "Ministry Opportunity Worksheet" which we continue to use.

You say, "Why then are we studying the same topic again? Have you run out of things to preach in the Bible?" No.

Two important reasons. One, the church has changed. There are many people here today that we not here 5 years ago. And two, you have changed, as an individual. You're not the same person you were 5 years ago. There may be new ministries God would have for you to undertake. Certainly, the needs of the church have changed. And the ministries of the church have changed. That means we need to know what God has to say about spiritual gifts.

What are spiritual gifts? Are spiritual gifts different from talents? How do you determine what your gift is? What happens if I don't use my gift? What happens if I do use my gift? How do I use my spiritual gift?

With these questions in mind, we want to launch into a new series this evening. We must turn to God's Word.

Tonight, our aim is to introduce the subject, to survey the scenery, to get the big picture. Then next week, we'll start looking at the individual spiritual gifts, one at a time.

The Texts:

Where does God teach us about spiritual gifts in His Word? There are 4 key texts. I challenge you to write them down, and read them prayerfully in the weeks ahead. They are: Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and I Peter 4.

In the weeks ahead, we'll spend time in each text.

To begin, let's turn to Romans 12...

Rom 12:3-8

Romans is the Cadillac of Paul's letters. It's a book full of wonderful doctrine. It's also a book that shows how doctrine applies to daily life. The first 11 chapters are doctrinal. The theme--the Righteousness of God.

We come to a transition in 12:1-2. "I beseech you, therefore..."

What difference should the righteousness of God make in our lives? That's what Rom 12-16 is all about. Doctrine leads to duty. Beliefs must affect behavior.

Let's do some inductive Bible study. I'll ask a few questions.

Q: What picture does Paul use in v 4 to illustrate the church? A Body

Q: In the Body, all members do not have the same what? Office

Think of the implications. God designed the church to have both Unity and Diversity. To be healthy, a body needs both. What's more, the health of the body is dependent upon the health of its parts.

Q: According to v 5, in what way is a church different from a lecture hall?

We are members of each other. We are linked to each other in Christ. We're related to each other. So we must work together.

Picture two draft horses. If the farmer is going to get his work done, he needs for his horses to work together, as a team. So it is in the church.

You're thinking, "What does this have to do with spiritual gifts?" V 6...

V 6 "Having then gifts differing according..."

Proposition: Tonight, as we consider Romans 12:6, let's observe 4 practical truths relating to spiritual gifts.

I. All Christians have spiritual gifts.

"HAVING then gifts"

II. Our spiritual gifts differ.

"Having then gifts DIFFERING"

A. Speaking Gifts

B. Serving Gifts

C. Sign Gifts

III. God determines our spiritual gifts.

"according to the grace of God that is GIVEN to us"

IV. Spiritual gifts are meant to be used.

I. All Christians have spiritual gifts.

"HAVING then gifts"

V 6 "Having then gifts"

Are you a charismatic Christian? Unfortunately, the word "charismatic" has taken a lot of abuse. The word is actually a biblical word. The word translated "gifts" in v 6 is the Greek word "charismata" (from the Greek root "charis" = grace). Spiritual gifts are literally "grace gifts."

Modern day charismatics place great emphasis on the category of spectacular gifts (tongues, healing, miracles). We'll talk about those gifts in a future study. But for now, let me say that in our reaction to misuse of spiritual gifts, let's not throw out the charisma. Spiritual gifts are good.

All Christians have spiritual gifts. The moment the Spirit of God regenerates our dead heart, the moment we acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we are baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ (I Cor 12:13). At that moment, God endows us with gifts.

Clarification: (Drullinger, 63) A spiritual gift is different from a talent. A talent is a native ability. A talent is an ability with which you were born. A spiritual gift is a spiritual ability. You receive a spiritual gift when you are born again.

All people have talents and abilities, saved and unsaved alike. You may have talents in music or public speaking or drama or art or mechanics or cooking. That's good, yet even though it's true that talent came from God, it's not a spiritual gift as such (talents and gifts often go together; a person with the gift of encouragement may use a talented voice to encourage others. But gifts are not limited to "talented" people).

All of us who know Christ have spiritual gifts. That's exciting. That's motivating. That's what makes ministry possible. God has something special He has designed you to do. No one else can fill the need you can.

Why?

II. Our spiritual gifts differ.

"Having then gifts DIFFERING"

There are a variety of spiritual gifts. In fact, there are about 20 different spiritual gifts mentioned in the NT. Paul mentions 7 here (see them).

Every Christian possesses the at least one spiritual gift. We have received them to equip us to provide a needed ministry in the church.

Why is there such a variety of spiritual gifts in the church? Because there is such a variety of needs!

There are 3 categories of spiritual gifts. Turn to I Peter 4.

V 10 "As every man has received the gift, even so minister..."

Notice we have ALL received the gift (singular). Yet see also that God's grace is "manifold" (lit. many-colored). Then Peter identifies 2 categories of gifts:

A. Speaking Gifts

V 11 "If any man speak"

There are speaking gifts: Exhortation, teaching, prophecy, etc.

What are those with speaking gifts to do? "let him speak..." There are a lot of sickly churches today because of a breakdown right here. They need those with speaking gifts to speak, with power and conviction and clarity, the oracles of God.

God has gifted some people with speaking gifts. And He holds them accountable to speak His Word, not their opinions, not their pet-peeves.

B. Serving Gifts

V 11 "If any man minister"

Serving gifts: mercy, hospitality, administration, etc.

What are those with serving gifts to do? "let him minister"

C. Sign Gifts

We'll explore in the future. Drullinger's comment is concise, "God gave sign gifts in the 1st century for a variety of reasons, chiefly to verify the message of Jesus Christ that the apostles and other believers preached following the Resurrection. Now that God's Word is complete in its written form, the need to verify the message has ended, and sign-gifts do not function today." (The Work of the Church, 69)

Caution: Don't view the gifts as tidy, neat little unrelated packages. They overlap. They interrelate. They are not static, but dynamic.

Transp: List of Spiritual gifts...

<u>Speaking Gifts</u>	<u>Serving Gifts</u>	<u>Sign Gifts</u>
Prophecy	Service	Miracles
Teaching	Faith	Healing
Exhortation	Giving	Tongues/Interpretation
Evangelism	Helps	
Knowledge/wisdom	Administration	
	Mercy	
	Hospitality	
	Discernment	

Application: The point is this. Our spiritual gifts differ. God could have given WBC a few "super-saints" equipped with all the gifts. And He could have told these super-saints, "You do all the ministry in the church. The others will watch, and clap once in awhile." But He didn't. He divided up the gifts to all the saints. And He expects all the saints to participate in the ministry of the church.

Tran: All Christians have spiritual gifts. Our spiritual gifts differ.

Who determines our spiritual gifts? Is it like grocery shopping--we walk down the aisle and pick and choose? No. Here's practical truth #3...

III. God determines our spiritual gifts.

"according to the grace of God that is GIVEN to us"

We have spiritual gifts because of the grace of God. Grace is unearned and unmerited. Out of His grace, God gave us salvation. Also, according to His grace, God has given to us spiritual gifts.

Think about it. Who determines the specific gifts we possess? God does. Who decides that one person in the Body is gifted as a speaker, and another is gifted as a behind the scenes person? God does.

Why do we need to remember that? Because as humans, we are plagued by pride. By nature, we are prone to take the credit for our service to the Lord. And quite frankly, some of the gifts obtain more recognition and applause than others. The mouth gets more attention than the toe.

Illust: Have you ever said, "Oh, I wish I could do that..."

Appreciation is one thing. Jealousy is another. As long as we remember who determines our gifts, there will be no room for jealousy or pride in the ministries of the church.

Tran: Why did God give us spiritual gifts? Notice a fourth truth...

IV. Spiritual gifts are meant to be used.

V 6 "Whether prophecy, LET US prophesy"

V 7 "Or ministry, let us wait..."

V 7 "Or he that teaches, on teaching"

Don't worry right now what these gifts ARE. I want you to see what these gifts are for--They are to be USED.

Where do you use gifts? In ministry. Spiritual gifts are for ministry. Spiritual gifts are not to be hoarded. They are for the good of the Body of Christ.

Let me ask you something. Are you using the spiritual gift God has given you? Are you contributing to the growth and well-being of the church? Are you a minister or a spectator?

Illust: Story of "Rabbit on a Swim Team"

Challenge: God has designed and gifted you to fulfill a need in this church that noone else can meet.

To me, it's thrilling to ponder that! True, it costs something to be involved in ministry. There's pain involved, even criticism. Ministry takes effort, and time, and sacrifice. Yet the thrill is this.

All of us have spiritual gifts. Our gifts differ. God gave us our gifts. And God expects us to use our gifts. And what's amazing is that He rewards us for faithfully using what He has given us!