

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 2/20/94 PM  
Romans 12:6-7 "The Gifts of Prophecy and Service"

**Intro:** "A Parable on Education"

The church is like a team. In God's design for the local church, it's all for one, and one for all. This truth is very apparent when we consider the topic of spiritual gifts.

Review:

Two weeks ago we began a series on Spiritual Gifts. It's the same topic many of us explored 5 years ago in a similar study.

There are four key passages dealing with the topic of spiritual gifts. What are they? Romans 12; I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4; and I Peter 4.

There are some 20 different gifts listed in the NT. These fit into 3 categories. In I Peter 4, Peter mentions two categories of spiritual gifts--speaking and serving. A third category of gifts are the sign gifts, which we'll investigate at a future time.

Transp: Listing of Gifts

READ--Romans 12:6-8

Key Points from our last study of Romans 12:6...

- 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.

God has a special plan for His Church. He desires everyone of us to function in the ministry of the gospel of His Son.

I believe that during His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ had all the gifts. Yet today, no one believer possesses all the gifts. Christ distributed them in the Church as He has seen fit. When all the gifts are exercised in the Body, the result is Christlikeness. And remember, that's the divine goal for the church--Eph 4:13, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Definition: "A spiritual gift is a channel through which the Holy Spirit ministers to the Body." (J. MacArthur, Jr., Body Dynamics, 105)

I think MacArthur's observation is helpful when he says, "...each believer receives one gift--unique to him, but that gift may combine elements from all the categories of giftedness. Each believer is, then, a spiritual 'snowflake.'" (107)

Tonight, we're going to begin a topical examination of the various gifts, one at a time. As we do, I challenge you to ask the Lord to verify if you have the particular gift. Try to think of those in the church who may have the gift. Let's encourage one another to use our gifts to honor God, and edify the Body of Christ.

**Proposition: This evening, we will investigate two of the spiritual gifts highlighted by Paul, in Romans 12:6-7.**

I. The Gift of Prophecy (6b)

A. What is it? The ability to speak the Word of God with power and clarity.

B. How is it to be used?

II. The Gift of Service (7a)

A. What is it? The ability to render practical help to those who are in need

B. How is it to be used?

**I. The Gift of Prophecy (6b)**

V 6--"whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of faith" What is the gift of prophecy? First, let's clarify what it's NOT. It's not crystal ball gazing (Jeanne Dixon). That's obvious for the person who takes serious the sufficiency of Scripture.

A. What is it?

What is the gift of prophecy? Let's examine the Scriptures carefully.

The word "prophecy" appears in various forms over 200 times in the NT. What does it mean? It comes from two greek words which mean "to speak forth; to tell forth; to declare". While it refers to both foretelling and forthtelling, in its primary NT usage, prophecy is forthtelling for another.

Example: When God called Moses to deliver Israel, Moses objected on the grounds that he could not speak well. Angry, God answered in Exodus 4:14-16; 7:1, "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. . . Thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth. . . and he shall be thy spokesman unto the people. . . and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet."

The first gift Paul highlights is the gift of prophecy.

Clarification: We must distinguish between prophecy and prophets. The first is a gift, the second an office. We read in I Cor 12:28, "And God has set some in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers..." We're told in Eph 4:11 that God gave gifted men known as "prophets" to the church.

Here's the distinction (as John MacArthur points out). There are no more prophets today, any more than there are Christ-appointed apostles. The office of the prophet has ceased. Yet the gift of prophecy still goes on to confirm the revelation already given.

What is the gift of prophecy? The ability to speak the Word of God with power and clarity.

How is it used?

B. How is it to be used?

First we need to ask--How was the gift of prophesy utilized in the early church? We're given an example in Acts 13:1-3. We're told that in the church at Antioch there were "prophets and teachers". While they were ministering and fasting, the Holy Spirit prompted these men to spearhead a new missionary program for the church. They announced to the church that God wanted the church to commission and send forth Paul and Barnabus for a specially designed ministry. God the Spirit prompted the prophets, who in turn passed the instructions on to the rest of the church.

The gift of prophecy is intended to be used to spur the church into action. It did not primarily refer to prediction, but instead to the communication of God's revealed truth. Apparently, prophecy can be used in a public setting (preaching) or in a private setting (one on one).

Notice the guideline given for the exercising of the gift of prophecy...

V 6b "let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith"

The phrase "proportion of faith" is used in the same sense as the phrase "measure of faith" in v 3. The person using the gift of prophecy is not to be governed by his emotions, or love of speaking, but by an entire dependence upon the Spirit of God. And the message must always be consistent with the basic tenets of the Christian faith, as recorded in God's Word (lit. "THE faith"). The use of the gift of prophecy must never contradict the clear teaching of Scripture.

How is the gift used today? Special revelation has ceased. The canon is complete. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness in the Word of God. So in what sense is the gift of prophecy to be practiced today?

Consider I Corinthians 14:1, 3--"Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. . . He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

The person with the gift of prophecy makes the Word of God relevant to a particular situation in a current context. Prophets are God's loudspeakers! The major responsibility of the gift of prophecy is to study and interpret the Word of God so that the church benefits. Paul says that prophecy is valuable for three functions:

1. Edification--the church experiences spiritual growth
2. Exhortation--the church experiences spiritual discipline
3. Consolation--the church experiences spiritual encouragement

The person with the gift of prophecy proclaims the Word of God with clarity, and applies it to a particular situation. This person has the ability to disturb the comfortable by announcing a particular message from God's Word. He may irritate the establishment. But the result of the use of the gift is that people are aroused to action.

Application: Perhaps you have the gift of prophecy. Where can you use this gift? Possible areas: Preaching; teaching SS; writing articles for newspaper, magazines, editorials, etc; Youth groups; one on one conversations...

Illust: What would happen if you tried to live on a diet of junk food?! Yet, entire congregations are starving spiritually because their weekly diet contains insufficient calories to sustain any decent measure of spiritual health. There is a glaring need in churches today for the exercise of the gift of prophecy--the proclamation of the Word of God. We need those with the gift of prophecy to remind us that our diet is insufficient without a steady intake of God's Truth.

There has been a resurgent interest in the gift of prophecy due to what is known as "Third Wave theology." Also known as the "Signs and Wonders Movement" and connected with "The Vineyard" churches (135 congregations in 1987, up to 300 in 1992, acc. to Bib Sac, JI 92). The title comes from their belief that a third wave of the Spirit hit the Church--the first in Pentecostalism around 1900, a second in the Charismatics in the 1950's, and the third around 1980.

More about this in a future study...

Tran: Some gifts pertain to speaking, like the gift of prophecy. But not all do. In fact, at least three of the seven gifts mentioned here refer to practical assistance to those in need--serving gifts.

## **II. The Gift of Service (7a)**

### A. What is it?

V 7--"Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering"

All Christians are called to serve one another (Gal 5:13). Yet some are especially grace-gifted for service to the Body. They have the gift of ministry (or service). We might call this gift the "gift of assistance." Christians with this gift are helpers, people who labor behind the scenes.

The greek word used by Paul here is diakonian, from which we get our word "deacon". The early deacons (Acts 6) modeled this gift. How? By caring for the practical needs of the widows.

Defin: The God-given ability to render practical help to those who are in need.

Remember, we are all to serve. Yet some have a special endowment from God for service.

### B. How is it to be used?

Take another close look at v 7. You may notice that certain words are in italics. That doesn't mean they are to be emphasized. Rather the italics mean that the words have been added to make the verse read more smoothly. Literally, v 7 reads, "Ministry. . . in ministering." The idea seems to be, "Don't talk about it, do it." And perhaps those with the gift of service are marked by a less-talk-more-action style of service to others, and ultimately to the Lord.

Biblical Examples: Most people are very familiar with biblical characters such as Paul, Peter, and John. They were upfront kinds of people. They had speaking gifts. But we have to search a little bit to find individuals with the gift of service. They're there, but they don't draw much noise, at least verbally. Their actions speak louder than their words.

Examples:

House of Stephanas (I Corinthians 16:15)--"they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints".

Dorcas (Acts 9:36)--"This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." Dorcas was a model of service. She helped people who were not being helped by others. In Acts 9:39 a group of women, specifically widows, gathered to weep when Dorcas died. This leads us to conclude that Dorcas had a regular ministry with women, particularly with those whose husbands had died. Perhaps she cared for older women who were not able to care for themselves.

Onesiphorus (II Timothy 1:16-18)--Paul praised this man. Why? Not because he was an intellectual. Not because of his position in the church. Not because he was a great evangelist. No, he praised him because of his willingness to visit Paul when he was in prison! He praised him because of his service: "for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain. . . and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."

Discuss: How can the gift of service be used in WBC?

There are endless opportunities to serve--taking a meal to a shut-in, shoveling snow, helping a single parent with child care, being an usher, decorating, driving the van, and on and on.

Illust:

Let's focus on a couple of specific ways the gift of service can be used:

1. Hospitality (see I Peter 4:9).

In the early church there were many traveling missionaries and teachers. The motels were indecent and even dangerous. So homes were needed to house and support these guests of the church. Peter urged the church to practice hospitality towards their guests.

2. Care Ministries--see Kathy Travis and Becky Hewitt if interested

3. The Nursery--There's two ways we can approach the nursery. One is to see it as a mere Sunday babysitting service, nothing more than a menial and thankless job. The other approach is to see the nursery as a place to minister the love of God to children. Sure there are dirty diapers. Sure there's lots of noise. Sure you have to "miss" out on the adult service. But what a ministry! What an opportunity to utilize the gift of service!

**Conclusion:**

Let's all ask ourselves this question: In the past week, how much time did I engage in meaningful ministry? True, we are all different. God has given us different spiritual gifts.

Are you using the spiritual gift God has given you?

Objection: "How do I determine how God has gifted me? Next week..."

**Next Week:**

Question: How do I discern my spiritual gift?

Answer: Three steps (adapted from Grace Chapel's booklet)

Handout: Look at the steps on the back of the handout

Directions for Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gift

**1. CONSIDER YOUR INTERESTS.**

What would you rather do for God than anything else in the world? God gives us certain desires and interests so we can use our gifts for Him.

**2. TRY DIFFERENT GIFTS.**

Look for opportunities in the church where you can employ a gift you suspect you have. Finding out what you don't have is very important in reducing the options.

**3. TEST YOUR EFFECTIVENESS.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Am I employing my gift successfully?

\_\_\_\_\_ Am I benefiting the body with my gift?

\_\_\_\_\_ Are others confirming my gift?

\_\_\_\_\_ Am I finding fulfillment and joy in exercising this gift?