

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 4/17/94 PM  
Romans 12:8 "Spiritual Gifts: Exhortation and Giving"

**Intro:**

If you're a Christian, if you have confessed Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of you're life, then God has given to you a spiritual gift. Your gift is a supernatural provision. God gave it to you. And He gave it to you for a purpose. To develop and use it to minister to others in the Church for His Glory!

I am awed when I look out and consider the vast potential in this room for the glory of God! We have all the spiritual equipment we need to impact this community for Christ. Our spiritual gifts differ, yet they blend.

Let's review the spiritual gifts we've already studied. Turn to Paul's list in Romans 12:6-8.

**Review: Spiritual Gifts**

Some in this room have the gift of prophecy. What is that?

The Gift of Prophecy: It is the ability to speak the Word of God with power and clarity. The gift of prophecy is intended to be used to spur the church into action. It does not primarily refer to prediction, but instead to the communication of God's revealed truth. Prophecy can be used in a public setting (preaching) or in a private setting (one on one).

The Gift of Ministry/Service: It is the ability to render practical help to those who are in need. All Christians are called to serve one another (Gal 5:13). Yet some are especially grace-gifted for service to the Body. They are often people who labor behind the scenes.

The Gift of Teaching: Teaching is the ability to communicate the truths of the Word of God to someone else in a clear fashion.

The Gift of Faith (I Corinthians 12:9): The gift of faith is the supernatural ability to trust God, and to encourage others to do the same.

Even with those 4 gifts in mind, we can see that the gifts fall into two categories. Peter highlighted them in I Peter 4:11. There are Speaking gifts, and there are Serving gifts.

Tonight, as we consider two more gifts in Rom 12:8, we'll see both. The first is a speaking gift.

**I. The Gift of Exhortation--Romans 12:8**

Romans 12:8 "Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation"

Now, exhortation is the responsibility of all Christians. We're told in Hebrews 3:13, "But exhort one another daily." But God has given certain Christians the gift of exhortation.

By the way, that's the way it is with all the spiritual gifts. All of us are responsible to have faith. But some have the gift of faith. All of us are to serve, but

some have the gift of service. All of us are to teach the Word to others, but some are especially grace-gifted for teaching.

Why is that? What do those who are gifted in a certain area do for the rest of us? First, they model Christ for us in that area. And second, they motivate us to be like Christ in that area.

What is the gift of exhortation?

#### A. The Gift of Exhortation: What is it?

Two words of caution. First, don't equate exhortation with browbeating from the pulpit. And second, don't narrowly view exhortation as solely a public gift.

It's a great gift. We can understand what the gift is by examining the word itself. The greek word for "exhorting" is *parakalo*. It's a compound word comprised of two smaller words (*para* = alongside of + *kaleo* = to call). A Paraclete is "one called alongside to help".

In I John 2:1 we're told that Jesus is our Paraclete. He is the "Advocate" who represents us before the Father. He is the One called alongside to help.

In John 14:16 the Holy Spirit is called the Paraclete. He is our Helper and Companion in this age, until Jesus returns.

The Lord Jesus is our heavenly Paraclete. The Holy Spirit is our resident Paraclete.

Now watch this. God has given some flesh and blood "paracletes" to the church. That's what Romans 12:8 says, "Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation." God has placed certain individuals in the Church with the gift of exhortation. God designed them to lead the way in the ministry of exhortation. They are "paracletes." They minister to us in the power of the Holy Spirit!

DEFINITION: The gift of exhortation is the supernatural ability to come alongside of people in order to help them.

What is the purpose of this gift? The purpose of exhortation is that one Christian might help another Christian live out their obedience to the Gospel. That's what Paul does in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you (same word--lit. "I exhort you"). As one commentator puts it, the person with this gift has been especially equipped to strengthen the weak, reassure the wavering, buttress the buffeted, steady the faltering, console the troubled, and encourage the halting (Flynn, 82-3).

Paul told Timothy in I Timothy 4:13, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."

Let's me speak frankly. No one would question that our church is to be a place where people can learn the Word of God. But we must do more than merely dump information into heads! God wants His Church to be a place where His people are exhorted to put His Word into action.

The gift of exhortation is a great gift. We need it.

#### B. The Gift of Exhortation: How is it to be used?

The ministry of exhortation is two pronged. It involves two activities.

First, exhortation involves encouraging. That's the first prong. Churches are filled with people who need a caring word of gentle encouragement to lift them up, to nudge them on in living for God. Even Christians become disheartened. There is a continual need for a word of comfort.

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There's a second prong involved in exhortation. In addition to encouraging, exhortation involves admonishing. Some people need to be prodded or even jolted into action. They know what to do. They know what the Bible says. But they are negligent when it comes to doing what they know. They need to be admonished.

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Both encouragement and admonishment are involved in exhortation. We catch the sense of both elements in I Thess 2:11-12 "As ye know how we exhorted and encouraged and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God."

Can you think of a biblical example of someone who had this gift? We considered one this morning, Barnabas, and will investigate his example again the next two Sunday mornings. It seems that every time we read about this man in the NT, he is encouraging someone. He encouraged people from Jerusalem to Antioch, from Tarsus to Cyprus. Barnabas was a like a big brother, always helping others in need.

The gift of exhortation is a valuable gift. It can be used in both public and private ministries. In the pulpit or the pew. It's available to both leaders and laymen.

Discuss: What are some ways this gift may be used?

Permit me to highlight three opportunities for this gift to be used.

1. Writing (Encouragement Cards)

When was the last time you wrote someone with the intention of encouraging them to live for the Lord? (assignment: hand out encouragement cards)

2. Music

There is no "spiritual gift of music" in the strict sense of the word. Music is a general grace to all mankind. But when the lyrics are theologically sound and the musician Spirit-filled, "singing and making melody" (Eph 5:19) is a superb way of exhorting the church in public ministry. I would thank our musicians who minister to the Body regularly in this way.

3. Counseling--one on one exhortation

Glaring needs of hurting people are all around us. And God can use you to have a ministry of exhortation in their lives. If you know the Scriptures, and if you are a maturing Christian, and if you can be a friend, you can provide much needed encouragement to a hurting person. The question is--Are you willing to get involved?

Caution: What's the goal of counseling? The same as the goal of exhortation.

I talked to someone this week whose wife is meeting with a biblical counselor. At the first session, he had them both answer the questions, "Why are you here? What do you want to get out of this counseling?" Afterwards, he read their answers and said this, "My goal as a biblical counselor is not to help you 'feel better.' If that's all you

want, we need go no further. My goal as a biblical counselor is to see God glorified in your life."

Was that a harsh statement? No. Because when God is glorified in my life, what is the by-product? I experience His peace, joy, and contentment.

Tran: We've considered the gift of exhortation--a speaking gift. Next Paul highlights a serving gift for us. By the way, Barnabas had both gifts.

## **II. The Gift of Giving--Romans 12:8**

Romans 12:8 "He that giveth, let him do it with liberality"

Here again, giving is the responsibility of all Christians. We're told in II Corinthians 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful (lit. "hilarious") giver."

God wants us all to practice giving. Giving is not confined to the rich. Nor is it an option. God expects all of His people to give the firstfruits of their income back to Him.

Caution: God does not want us to give simply to salve our conscience. Nor does He tell us to give in order to compensate for sin in our lives. And He certainly does not want us to give in order to twist God's arm and force Him to bless us. No, God loves a cheerful giver.

In fact, giving is a mark of spiritual maturity. Two examples...

--The Churches of Macedonia gave out of deep poverty to help out the poor Christians living in Judea, according to II Cor 8:1-2.

--The believers at Philippi gave repeated and generous financial help to Paul in his missionary efforts.

Giving is the privileged responsibility of each of us who know Christ. But there's a difference between giving, and the gift of giving.

### A. The Gift of Giving: What is it?

A lengthy definition is this--the God-given ability to give material goods and financial resources with joy and eagerness, without self-seeking motives, in order that others may benefit, and God be glorified.

Cranfield says that it is the "spiritual capacity for generosity."

DEFINITION: The ability to show generosity, without ulterior motive, purely out of love for God.

This is a "nitty gritty" gift. It's a "take action" gift. It's a "need oriented" gift.

The gift of giving does not relate to how much a person has. Poor people can have the gift of giving. Those with modest means can possess this unglamorous gift. To the person who has this gift, very few things bring as much pleasure as giving to further the Lord's work.

Giving certainly includes money. But it also applies to the things we possess--our homes, our food, our clothes.

Have you met people who love to give? They are refreshing to be around. They remind us of Christ. Oh, they make us feel uncomfortable. Why so? Because their generosity highlights our stinginess. But if we allow them, they minister to us. They motivate us to be givers, instead of takers, in life.

#### B. The Gift of Giving: How is it to be used?

Notice that Paul qualifies the use of this gift in v 8.

"with liberality" Literally the word means "without folds". It communicates the idea of giving with unmixed motives. Giving is to be done without pretense or regret for having given so much (remember Ananias and Saphira?).

If we're honest, a lot of us struggle here. We find it difficult to give merely out of appreciation to God. American Christianity has been sold the wrong bill on giving. We have been conditioned. We expect that if we give, we'll get something.

One Christian TV ministry says, "Send us a gift of \$25 or more, and we'll send you this video." A Christian radio personality puts out this appeal, "I need the gifts of generous people like you if this ministry is to continue. Please send me a gift of \$20 and I'll send you my recent, best-selling book." Christian institutions fund programs this way, "For a gift of \$50 dollars, we'll send you this attractive hat. For a \$100 gift, you can have a study Bible, personalized with your name in gold letters. And for a gift of \$1,000, we'll put your name on a block in the foyer of our new building."

Why do we do that? May we constantly take an inventory check in this area.

Rick Yohn cautions us to be careful of our motive in giving. "We shouldn't demand our name be placed on the church furniture. We shouldn't attempt to control the church because of our financial position. We must recognize that money is a gift of God to be used to serve Him."

Paul's remarks to Timothy communicate this as well. We read in I Timothy 6:17-19, "Charge them that are rich . . . to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to share. . ."

The person with the gift of giving gives cheerfully. Because it's a gift, not a duty.

R. G. LeTourneau expresses his attitude towards money in his autobiography, "Mover of Men and Mountains". He often said, "The question is not how much of my money I give to God, but rather how much of God's money I keep for myself."

LeTourneau captured the essence of Romans 12:8 beautifully. A person with the gift of giving is to exercise that gift with "liberality". Not tightfisted. Not grudgingly. Not with ulterior motive. But with joy and delight at the privilege of pleasing and obeying God by returning to Him what is already His in the first place.

Application: God has blessed all of us more than we deserve. What are we doing with what He has given us? What are we doing with our finances? Are we giving in a sacrificial, yet cheerful manner? What are we doing with our spiritual gifts? Are we using them? Are we involved in ministering in the lives of other people, for the glory of God?

**Challenge:**

Are you using your spiritual gift?