

Romans 12:7 "The Gifts of Service and Teaching"

Rom 12:7 "If it is serving, let him serve;..."

As we consider the gifts of the Holy Spirit we must never lose sight of two very important things:

- 1) These are gifts given by God to people in the Body of Christ and
- 2) These gifts are given for the specific purpose of building up the Body of Christ to the glory of God.

To use a gift in a way that solicits attention for the user of the gift, or to use a gift in a way which does not serve the Body is not to understand Christ's ultimate purpose in giving gifts.

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

We are to be servants of one another and love one another so that the "other" we're serving will be encouraged, edified, built up and strengthened so that they in turn may be the best servants they can be with the understanding that ultimately we serve our Most High God and Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Col 3:23-24 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

And so all of us are to be servants for our God desiring to be used by Him in whatever capacity He desires for us. We must be willing to place our lives in His hands and then follow when He leads.

But our text this morning speaks of a gift of service. The NKJV puts it... "or ministering, let us use it in our ministering. The NIV ... Rom 12:7 "If it is serving, let him serve;"

Now if everyone is supposed to be serving how is it that there is a specific gift of service? And if it is a specific gift how is it to be used and how do we recognize it as such?

All fair questions. The answer, as always, lies with God and His intentions and will. If all Christians are to serve and yet some have

a "gift of service" then it must relate to specific service that God enables us to pursue for Him and to accomplish with His strength.

Now the Greek word for service or ministry is *diakonia* which means, attendance as a servant; aid; service. This is also where we get our English word deacon which leads many to assume that the gift of service being referred to is the office of deacon. And though it may certainly include that it is not limited to that as we will see.

There may be specific tasks God comes to us with and the task may involve a concentrated effort. The task may be short term or long term but it involves a supernatural empowering until the task is completed.

There is a drive that pushes us to set our faces like a flint and not give up until God shows us the task is completed or until He takes us home. This drive, this desire to please God in a particular way, could very well be the gift of service in action.

More often than not the gift of service compliments other gifts. For example a person who has the gift of mercy may find themselves out in front of an abortion chamber to minister to the women who are entering.

Their mercy gift may be used by God to empathize with and come along side these hurting people in a way that shows those women that you really care about them and only want to help as you direct them to Christ.

With that gift of mercy you may find that you only use it periodically in that context as you have the time or the desire. But, the gift of service in relation to the gift of mercy in that context may give a burning desire to be down at that clinic as often as you can get down there. It drives you to do anything to help those women see Christ and His mercy.

The Lord has always given gifts to His people for service. Even in the O.T. God gave gifts so that His work would go forward and His will was accomplished. One of those gifts was the gift of service. It was a special empowering to give the motivation and the desire to set your hand to a task that God gives and to see it through, no matter what.

In 1Chronicles 7:30-40 is recorded the sons of Asher. And the sons of Asher were a group of people called out by God for a specific task. It was noble task, but a dangerous task. Of the men

of Israel these men were hand-picked by God and given a specific direction to accomplish God's desire.

Given this direction they were also given the tools to accomplish this task very effectively. Out of all the tasks in Israel, these men were content and dedicated to what God called them to do.

The task? Warrior. We read in 1Chr.7:40 "And these were the sons of Asher, heads of the fathers' houses, choice and mighty men of valor, heads of the princes. And the number of them enrolled by genealogy for service in war was 26,000."

God did not call them to be carpenters, He did not call them to be shepherds, nor priests. He called them to be warriors. But with any call He equips them and gives them the burning desire to serve in that role.

We go to a passage like Exodus 31 and we see a similar situation.

EXO 31:1-11 Then the LORD said to Moses, 2 "See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts - 4 to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, 5 to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. 6 Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you: 7 the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent - 8 the table and its articles, the pure gold lampstand and all its accessories, the altar of incense, 9 the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, the basin with its stand - 10 and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, 11 and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them just as I commanded you."

Here God supernaturally gives specific gifts to a man to accomplish a specific purpose for God. He calls Bezalel and then gifts and empowers him in the areas of craftsmanship. Now lots of people are what we would refer to as gifted. But being gifted by God for specific service can sometimes be confused with God-given talents any particular person may enjoy.

They seem to excel in areas of music, or sports or any other area we would deem as important. But the gift of service is not

employed in the giving of any particular gift as much as it is in the use of the gift with special desires to use that gift to honor God in a particular task.

Bezalel was not gifted as a craftsman to pursue entrepreneurial desires. He wasn't called by God to go into business and make lots of money as a carpenter. That doesn't mean God doesn't give desires and talents to people to be entrepreneurs, but the distinction with the gift of service is to serve in a particular capacity for God's special service.

Bezalel may have gone on to be a carpenter, although scripture seems to indicate that he continued to serve God as one who stayed in service regarding the things of the temple. And so, his God-given abilities for craftsmanship coupled with his "gift of service" was to craft the articles of service for the Temple.

We go the N.T. and we see that Paul was gifted in many many ways by God. He had the gift of miracles, the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy and probably every other gift mentioned in the N.T.

But the one gift which motivated Paul to fulfill his main ministry, which was being an apostle to the Gentiles, was the gift of service. God gifted Paul with service so that he would earnestly desire to fulfill his ministry.

Paul shares a little of this insight into his ministry when he told Timothy in 1Ti 1:12 "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service."

His ability to serve and the burning desire to fulfill his ministry allowed him to even put his life on the line many times. The gift of service will do that; not necessarily put you in harm's way, but that you will stay your course in any particular ministry because God is the One giving the strength.

2Co 3:4-6 "Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. 5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

The gift of service will enable you to use other gifts as the Spirit of God empowers you not to look to the left or right but to remain faithful to the task until God completes it in you.

Paul explains the duty of serving as God calls and gifts in terms of a soldier who is called to active duty wanting to please his leader.

2Ti 2:4,10 "No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer. 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

Paul not only understood his call but would do anything to endure and accomplish that call as God gave the gifts for the task and the strength to walk in that task even when all strength seemed to be absent.

It was a supernatural strength for Paul when he was stoned in the city of Lystra, left for dead, and then to get up and go back into the city to continue right where he left off in preaching the gospel.

At that moment it wasn't the gift of prophecy that motivated Paul to go back, it wasn't the gift of tongues, it wasn't the gift of knowledge, it was the gift of service which the Holy Spirit poured out on Paul. His service to the people came from his service to God first and foremost.

People have asked me, 'Drew why do you continue to serve when the road seems so hard?' My answer is always the same. God has called me. How can I do anything less? But that attitude doesn't come from my intestinal fortitude. It's a gift which only God can give.

And so, I love the flock God has given me. But that has never been the main motivation for me, nor should the particular task God gives you ever be the main motivation. Our service to love others, in whatever capacity, must always be from first wanting to love and please God.

If Paul's service was dependent upon the love of people for him he would never have gone on. He loved people because he loved God. And he loved God because Christ first loved him. If God has given you gifts then desire to use those gifts. And if you see God wanting to use you for a particular task ask for the gift of service.

But always remember that whether one has the gift of service or not we are all to serve one another. Serve in the Spirit as you serve in loving others and always remember what Paul said in Col 3:23-24 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an

inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Back in our text in Romans Paul then mentions another gift which God has given to the church to be used through the people of God and that gift is teaching.

Rom 12:7 "If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;"

The gift of teaching is one of those gifts which is vital to the equipping of the saints. Paul gives a list of certain gifts in Eph.4:11 which are all used in the equipping of the saints, and the gift of teaching is included.

Now, as with any gift, this gift is to be used for the purpose God has set forth. But simply because someone does not have the gift of teaching does not mean that all God's people shouldn't be willing to teach or instruct.

The Random House College Dictionary defines teach as: "to impart knowledge of, or skill in."

You don't need the gift of teaching to impart knowledge, to give someone information about something. For example, whenever we give the gospel of Jesus Christ we are imparting knowledge about our Savior to someone who needs such knowledge.

The apostle Peter mentions this.

1Pe 3:15 "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,..."

In sharing the gospel, we are teaching in the strict sense of the word. If someone comes to you and is struggling with an area of life which has them confused then any believer must be prepared to take them to the word of God and encourage them with the promises and assurance that God gives through His word.

It could be something as simple as a young Christian man or woman wondering if it's okay to date or pursue an unbeliever. And you gently but firmly encourage them to consider what God says on this matter.

Paul said in 2Co 6:14 "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

Now you may not be able to quote chapter and verse but often times the Lord will bring to mind the intent of the verse and you can paraphrase the intent. That is teaching or instructing with the purpose of building up that individual so they may be conformed into the image of Christ.

By the way, that's why it's always a good idea to be in the word constantly so that you can give people good counsel according to God's word. The more you're in the word, the more confident you'll be concerning His word and the more accurately you will give people His word for instruction.

But the gift of teaching is a gift from God which is designed to be used with the specific purpose of instructing in a way that helps people see clearly, and in detail, what God is speaking through His word.

The gift of teaching given to people is able to take the hard and sometimes complicated passages and make them clear and plain and simple. The gift of teaching will also be able to take the simple passages and bring in profound insights that may otherwise go unnoticed.

I've known those with the gift of teaching, including myself, who sometimes take the simple and make it complicated and take the complicated and put it in another galaxy.

Sometimes we get carried away. But for the most part it's a very encouraging gift. In fact, when we look at the word of God we find that teaching is an activity which was a major part of Christ's ministry.

Yes, He healed the sick and gave sight to the blind. But in comparison to Him teaching, those things were not the main part of His time ministering.

If you were to go to a concordance of the Bible you would find that in the four gospels Jesus is called Teacher no less than 41 times. And that doesn't even include the myriads of times it is recorded that He was in the Temple teaching or on the mountain side teaching.

That distinction comes only because He was continually teaching the people. Though Jesus healed many, He is never referred to in the gospels as Healer.

They would come to Him and say things like: 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You....' 'Teacher, what good thing shall I do to obtain eternal life?' 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment?'..... Etc.

They never came and said Good Healer what good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus was always teaching and instructing concerning the Kingdom of God and the gospel found in Himself.

Teaching is a wonderful gift that Christ gives to His people, but it's a gift with great responsibility.

Jam 3:1 "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."

This is not meant to scare people away from being teachers, it's simply meant to teach us to approach such a gift and ministry with the sobering reality that whom God gifts He requires that we be faithful with such gifts.

On the flip-side of that we should not be lax or lazy or carnal about pursuing our responsibilities in this area. The writer of Hebrews rebuked his readers because they had done precisely this very thing.

Heb 5:11-14 "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

Teaching in the church must never be relegated to some back seat as though it were unimportant. I've heard it said by Christians that the church should get away from emphasizing doctrine and just love.

To that I say, that is a teaching from the pit of hell. You see teaching is always going on. We need to distinguish between good

teaching and false teaching. Not to emphasize doctrine is not what God's word teaches.

Here's what Paul say's about it.

2Ti 4:3-4 "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."

That time has come and many have turned aside to myths and are chasing their tails, and then wonder why the church is in such a mess. The word doctrine is literally translated instruction.

That's what Jesus spent His entire earthly ministry doing before accomplishing the ultimate task which was to give His life as a ransom for many. He was always instructing in love. And sometimes His instruction was very firm.

And so, for the one who has the gift of teaching he or she must use it in a way that instructs without compromise, not tickling the ears of people but helping them to see what God is instructing His church as they love the body of Christ with the truth.

Tit 2:1 "You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine."

How does someone know if they have the gift of teaching? Let me give you some things to look for. First, if one has the gift of teaching they will always have a desire to be teachable. If you're not willing to be taught of God, and to be taught by others and submit as you sit under a teacher then the chances are good that the gift of teaching is something you're either fighting or simply don't have.

Of course being teachable doesn't always guarantee that one will have the gift of teaching, but one with the gift must be teachable, willing to walk in the teachings of God's word. Another thing to look for is the desire for the word of God. And though this must never be limited to the one with the gift of teaching it must be central as that gift is employed.

The apostles Peter's epistle was to the entire church but it must be understood that the word of God he addresses was a cornerstone in his life.

1Pet.2:1... "Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to your salvation."

The one with the gift of teaching will have very strong desires to dig deep into the word for himself and for the building up of the Body. Like David they can say: **Psalm 119:162** ¹⁶² I rejoice at Your word, As one who finds great spoil.

The gift of teaching excites the student of the word like one finding great spoil. But the gift of teaching will always prompt that one to teach, to instruct. Again, like David... Psa 119:172 "May my tongue sing of your word, for all your commands are righteous."

The gift of teaching is one of those gifts which must be pursued. It is an exercise of discipline to be able to use that gift. Paul instructed Timothy in 1Tim.4:16.... "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching."

Later in that same letter Paul points out one of the qualifications of an elder, which includes the ability to teach.

1Tim.5:17 "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching."

Now, again it must be pointed out that an elder may not have the "gift of teaching" but that elder must be able to teach. But, in either case, it must take effort and discipline to teach whether one has the gift of teaching or not.

And, of course, as with any gift from the Spirit it is designed to lift up the name of Jesus Christ and so too with the gift of teaching. The word of God are the words of Jesus who is the living Word. And we must never forget what Jesus said in Mat 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and **teaching** them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

One last thing about this gift of teaching. Like any gift it is to be used in the Body of Christ. If we are not using the gifts in the Body no one will recognize that you have such a gift and cannot encourage you towards that gift.

To say you have the gift of hospitality and yet it's never practiced in the Body, one has to wonder. If you say you have the gift of exhortation and yet it's not being practiced in the Body, then we are being denied a real asset.

In like manner, if one has the gift of teaching and is not showing the fruits of it in the Body no one will know and be blessed by their gift.

If you do not have the strong desires that I've mentioned don't fret that you don't have the gift of teaching. Remember what Paul said in 1Co 12:29 "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?"

The implied answer is no. Not everyone has these gifts. But I would add that please don't use that as an excuse to be lax in the seeking of God in His word or of seeking to know the things of the word as you personally study it.

Always be teachable and always call on the Holy Spirit to lead you and guide you into all truth, and rely on the Spirit's power to walk in that truth to the honor and glory of God as Jesus Christ is magnified in and through us.