

Romans 12:8 "The Gifts of Exhortation, of Giving, of Leadership and Mercy"

Romans 12:6,8 ⁶ "Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: ...he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

As we consider these last four gifts in our text we must see that Paul means for the people of God to be using them inside and outside of the Body of Christ so that our Lord's will may be accomplished through us.

A quick observation about the gifts and ministries of the Spirit: It stands to reason that a gift of the Spirit is something of the nature and attribute of God shown through God's people.

Example: The gift of exhortation, (as the NAS puts it), is a glimpse into how God exhorts. The gift of giving is a glimpse into how God desires to lavish upon us those things for our good, especially seen in His gift of salvation in Christ. The gift of leading or ruling shows us that God is our Lord and Master and that He endues some with a gift to help us follow Him. The gift of mercy allows us to taste mercy which has at its heart the mercy of God given to us.

And so, though these gifts may be given to men for our edification they also enable us to get a glimpse into the nature of God as He personally works in the lives of His people.

The gifts also are used as a means of having a tangible working of God that others may see and then emulate. All of us are called to be merciful, but someone with the gift of mercy can be used as an example in the Body of Christ so that we have a means of understanding how mercy is to be extended.

And so, the more you exercise your gift the better others are able to see just how that particular area of life in the Body is to work itself out in our own lives.

I may not have the gift of hospitality. But if I want to know how to practically practice hospitality I would seek someone out in the Body whom God has gifted in that area. Someone may not have the gift of teaching, but if that person wanted to get a handle on how to instruct, let's say his children, then he may want to observe how that gift is being used by a teacher and glean from him or her.

And so we shouldn't think that simply because we're not given a particular gift by the Spirit that we're not responsible for seeking to please God in areas outside of our particular gift.

With some gifts that will not be possible as with the gift of tongues for example. If you don't have it you can't, or maybe I should say, you shouldn't fake it. But if you understand that the gift of tongues is a way of directing our praise and adoration and prayers to God then you can glean from that by desiring to praise and adore and pray more often to God. It will just be in your native tongue as opposed to an unknown tongue.

Let me just add that if you would like the gift of tongues ask God for it. Paul tells us in 1Co 14:5 "I would like every one of you to speak in tongues"; but he also says that not all will have this gift. But it certainly couldn't hurt to come to your heavenly Father and ask Him. When I teach on tongues we'll look more closely into these things.

So with these things in mind let's finish our text this morning. The gift of exhortation is first in verse 8. The word exhort in the Greek is *Parakaleo*. It's made up of two words... *Para* which is to come beside someone. And *Kaleo* which is to call. And so *Parakaleo* is to come along side someone to call to them. The implication is to exhort or encourage them in a particular way.

The Random House College Dictionary defines exhort: To urge, advise, or caution earnestly. This is a good definition because it gives us the sense of urgency in the coming alongside to call to someone.

This is a gift used in the Body of Christ to call people to consider a truth of God that will enable them to grow and to stay on track with Christ. Often times it is directed at a particular problem or situation that needs to be corrected, or it may simply be an encouragement to embrace a truth of God which the listener needs to consider.

The gift of exhortation will often be used in conjunction with other gifts like the gift of teaching, the gift of prophecy, the gift of knowledge or wisdom. And as with any gift it must be tempered with love which is the fruit of the Spirit.

But always it is used by God to help us focus or re-focus on a particular truth of God that will help us to magnify Christ. Remember, any gift of the Spirit is never designed to draw attention away from Jesus. This does not denigrate the work of the Spirit, but places the emphasis of the work of the Spirit in its proper place.

Jesus spoke of the ministry of the Spirit in Joh 15:26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, ***he will testify about me.***"

Okay, let's look at a few ways from scripture where exhortation is used in the Body of Christ. One of the most important things to keep in mind is that to exhort anyone in a biblical sense is to encourage according to the word of God.

This false notion that "all truth is God's truth" and therefore it may all be used to exhort people to grow is the fastest way to undermine the truth of God's word.

The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. David said in Psa 119:9 "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word."

Man's wisdom is not the way to salvation and it can't ultimately solve our deepest problem which is spiritual in nature. Sin, in whatever form, is a spiritual problem. Just ask Adam and Eve one day, they'll tell you.

And that's the problem whenever we take certain truths deemed "Truth" by the world; we lose sight of the only true standard by which all men can know God's liberating truth, God's word. Jesus said, "Father sanctify them in Your truth, Your word is truth."

The gift of exhortation, and exhortation in general, is designed to point us back to the truth, Jesus being the truth, the way and the life.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church and said in 1Thes.4:1-3 ... "Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord

Jesus that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification...."

This is exhortation to grow in Christ. Speaking of the qualifications of an elder Paul said to Titus in Tit.1:9 ... (he must hold) "fast the faithful word which is in accordance with sound teaching, that he may be able both to *exhort* in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."

The entire word of God is an exhortation from our Lord to us to accept Christ by faith and walk in His ways. The gift of exhortation will always be used with this in mind. You may not always be quoting chapter and verse in your exhortation, but it must not contradict the sound teaching of God's revealed word.

I like the way William Barclay puts it: "Exhortation should have one dominating note, and that should be encouragement. Real exhortation aims not so much at dangling a man over the flames of hell as spurring him on to the joy of life in Christ."

Next: The Gift of giving. "He who gives, with liberality." The NIV puts it: "if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously;" The KJV puts it "he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity."

As with all the gifts this is something that the Holy Spirit has given to certain Christians for the edification of the Body of Christ. This does not suggest that if I don't have the gift of giving that I shouldn't give. It's simply a gift where this person's ministry includes a supernatural prompting to give in areas where others may not.

As God is the Giver of all good things the gift of giving will reflect His desire to give. Now, there is the misconception that everyone with the gift of giving is necessarily wealthy.

The gift of giving may not necessarily have anything to do with the size of your pocketbook or wallet. We see this in action with one particular woman in the gospel of Mark.

Mar 12:41-44 "Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins,

worth only a fraction of a penny. 43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on."

The gift of giving goes beyond what we would consider that which God expects of us. For a person with the gift of giving they are prompted by God to look for ways to give extra to those things that will encourage and promote the ministry of Christ in the world. Sometimes God will give extra to that person to give and sometimes He won't.

Again, it has to do more with a heart desire rather than a monetary abundance. The gift of giving may not always have to do with giving of money alone, it may include giving of other provisions: food, clothing, blankets, shelter and so on. Some might add the giving of time, but the gift would seem to be able to meet tangible needs and if time is something that can meet a tangible need like helping someone move locations from one house to another the gift could certainly include that.

By the way, the gift of giving is not limited to being used by believers only in the Body of Christ, though that would certainly be one of the main places we would expect to see it. The gift of giving might be seen in the way Christians help to meet the needs of unbelievers at times.

The storm victims of Hurricane Andrew saw an outpouring of supplies to meet their needs. And much of those needs were met through churches. Those with the gift of giving were undoubtedly part of that effort. And because of that gift in operation other gifts like evangelism were used to bring people to Christ whose hearts were now receptive because of the love of Christ demonstrated.

This is God's design. He will use many gifts working in conjunction with each other to accomplish His will and further His Kingdom. But what seems to distinguish this gift of giving from giving in general is that it carries with it a delighting in the giving along with a purposeful accomplishment.

The word says if you have the gift of giving then give with liberality or with simplicity. The idea here is that it goes beyond the norm and it gives with proper motives.

Hodge in his commentary on Romans equates the Greek word, which can be translated liberality, as well as simplicity, with the idea of singleness of mind.

He says, "This duty, by whomsoever performed, is to be done with purity of motive, free from all improper designs. This same word is rendered singleness of heart in Eph.6:5."

And though all of us should approach our service to God with pure motives, the giving of your wealth, in whatever form, must be done with the pure motive of not bringing attention to yourself.

Another good rule of thumb for everyone, including the one with the gift of giving, is found in 2Co 9:7 "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

When Christ gave His life for us it was not done under compulsion, it was done out of love for us and love for the Father. He gave to us cheerfully.

Heb 12:2 "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, *who for the joy set before him endured the cross*, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Now at this point, there might be the temptation to exhort the church to be giving more and maybe even teach on tithing. I don't feel compelled by the Spirit to teach at this point on those things. But I would remind you that Jesus does take a personal interest in our giving, but not because He needs our money.

I find it fascinating that when John recounts the incident in the temple with the woman who gave her two copper coins it says that "Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury."

He purposely sat right across from the tithe box, if you will, and watched everyone as they gave. But He did more than notice the amount, He considered the heart in giving in each case. If I would exhort and encourage you in this matter I would simply remind you that Jesus knows our hearts, and desires we give with cheerfulness as we honor Him.

Next is the gift of leading or ruling. "He who leads, with diligence." The Greek word for leading is interesting in that it

simply means "one standing in front". Vincent in his Word studies in the N.T. says, "The reference is to any position involving superintendence. No special ecclesiastical office is meant."

The idea here is that if God has placed you in a position of taking the lead in any particular area of ministry you must approach it with the attitude of standing in front and being the example.

Tit 3:8 "This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to DEVOTE themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone."

The word translated devote in Titus is the exact same word we have in Romans for lead or rule. And though it may not have the exact meaning since they are in different contexts the idea is similar. Being in front and devoted to the task which involves leadership.

This of course is important for Pastors, elders and deacons. But it's not limited to male leaders in those roles. It includes women who have leadership roles. Those leadership roles may be limited in some ways as they will not pertain to authoritative leading over the church, but they will include leadership in their respective ministries and the gifts they have for those ministries.

But this gift of leading carries with it, like the gift of giving or any other gift which God gives, a real desire to use it effectively in the Body of Christ. And let me add that in any area of LEADING we must be willing to FOLLOW Jesus and His word.

Paul says, "He who leads, with diligence." The idea of diligence is to approach the task or ministry with an earnest desire to accomplish it so that God may be glorified and people will be built up and encouraged in Christ.

But, we should never be waiting for such a gift to be in that attitude of wanting to please Christ. All of us are to serve in the Spirit. And it is the Spirit who enables us to lift up Christ. But if you want to know how to lead in your sphere of ministry and you don't happen to have this gift, look to someone who has it and learn from them.

Our last gift in our text is mercy. "If it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." Mercy is one of those gifts every church needs. And as with all the gifts it finds its greatest expression with God Himself.

David shares a prayer as the Holy Spirit lead him in Psa.86:15..
"But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious,
longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.

The gift of mercy will usually find itself being expressed in these ways of compassion, graciousness, longsuffering and all of it connected to the truth which can set us free.

Mercy is often connected to ministering to those who are deserving of justice. And though justice should never be overlooked in those matters, mercy comes to the forefront and offers forgiveness and reconciliation. And if it's accepted, mercy wins out and God is glorified.

The primary definition found in the Random House College Dictionary defines mercy as: "compassionate or kindly forbearance shown toward an offender, an enemy, or other person in one's power; compassion, pity, or benevolence."

Man stands guilty before God and is worthy of condemnation and yet God extends mercy as He extends a solution to man's guilt. Whether man accepts that mercy is another question, but mercy is still there.

The writer of Hebrews quotes Jer.31:34 and speaks of God in Heb.8:12 when he writes... "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

Often times people get the idea that the gift of mercy is just being compassionate and having a shoulder for someone to lean on. Though it would include that, mercy will give an invitation to seek the truth and walk in that truth.

If the gospel, which is given as an act of mercy, never encouraged people to repent of their sin and embrace Christ as the only way of salvation, that mercy would be powerless and without hope.

Mercy always gives hope in the truth. But hope is always connected to faith.

Rom 8:24-25 "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

Our faith must always have an object. And Jesus Christ must be that object. And so when the gift of mercy is in operation we must

be pointing people to the truth and the hope we may have in Christ who forgives us of sin.

A person not willing to receive that truth by faith will not receive the mercy which is being extended and they will continue to have no hope. Tasting mercy and receiving mercy are two different things.

And so if you have the gift of mercy be sure to include in your compassion and graciousness and longsuffering the truth which is able set them free and exhort them to receive it by faith. Mercy doesn't wink at or overlook sin. But it always give the solution and it doesn't rest until that one comes to the reality that mercy is at the heart of God's salvation and sanctification.

And, like God, we must all extend mercy with cheerfulness. God takes delight in extending mercy because He knows the result will be peace and fellowship with Him.

The Greek word for cheerful in our text is *hilarotes*. It's where we get our English word hilarity and exhilarate. Being hilarious is not being out of control, as is demonstrated with this "Holy Hilarity" shown in the "Holy Laughter" movement, with people barking like dogs, or falling on the ground in uncontrollable laughter.

I like the way Vincent puts it in his word studies. He says, "The joyful eagerness, the amiable grace, affability going the length of gayety, which make the visitor a sunbeam penetrating into the sick chamber, and to the heart of the afflicted."

A person with the gift of mercy has a wonderful appreciation of the mercy which is extended by Christ to we who are full of sin and deserving of death. That appreciation shows itself in thankfulness as it's extended to others.

But all of us should practice mercy, knowing that all of us have received mercy from the One who is mercy; our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory.

What's so beautiful about the Body of Christ is that as the Spirit is working in and through us, all of the gifts can be used together. You might find that in the Body there is someone in need and a couple of people see the need and one has the gift of encouragement while the other has the gift of mercy. And together they can meet a need.

Another may find that their gift of teaching can help instruct a believer in discovering what their gift is and how it can be used in the Body. And through the gift of teaching the gift exhortation is utilized and the next thing you know people are being blessed and Jesus is being lifted up in our midst.

That's how the Body of Christ is to work and that's how the church can grow, and the responsibility of ministering doesn't fall only on the shoulders of one person, who in many churches is only the Pastor and maybe one or two other key people. You're all key people to Jesus.

Next week we'll jump over to 1Corinthians and look at those gifts which Paul describes in 1Cor.12:8-10.... Word of wisdom; word of knowledge; gift of faith; gifts of healings; gift of miracles; prophecy which we've already discussed; discerning of spirits; different kinds of tongues; and the interpretation of tongues.

[THIS WILL BE A SEPARATE STUDY WHICH WILL SHORTLY BE ABLE TO BE ACCESSED THROUGH OUR WEB PAGE]

We won't get to all of them next week, but we will hopefully see what these gifts are and how God desires to use them and use them in this Body.

Keep seeking God and the gifts He has for you. Keep seeking His filling of the Spirit and always desire to be used of Him to His honor and glory, and never take for granted the greatest gift we have; the gift of eternal life we have in Christ.