



**“I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3).**

## **The Need for Spiritual Gifts**

**Central Truth:** The exercise of spiritual gifts produces effective service.

**L381. Date:** March 1990. **Text:** Romans 12:9-21.

**Topic:** Holy Spirit: Gifts of.

Upon the first reading of the text for this week's study one might ask, “What does that have to do with spiritual gifts?” The answer is in the rest of Romans 12.

Verse 1 speaks of the availability to God necessary to exercise one's spiritual gift. Verse 2, calls for the separation from the world required for God's power to rest upon one's spiritual gift. Verse 3 speaks of the humility of spirit demanded of one who would use his gift. Verses 4 and 5 urge participation in the body as one ministers his spiritual gift. Verses 6-8 list the blessed serving gifts that the Holy Spirit confers upon Christians. Verses 9-21 describe the life situations in which spiritual gifts are used. The theme of spiritual gifts undergirds the entire twelfth chapter of Romans.

Spiritual gifts are not employed in some uniquely spiritual isolation but in a sin-cursed world. How does the ministry of spiritual gifts relate to us in the family of God? How does that ministry relate to our involvement with those outside the Christian faith? This week's study answers those questions.

### **I. SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST (Romans 12:9-16)**

The ministry of Christian to Christian is vitally related to the exercise of spiritual gifts. As each member of the physical body contributes its function to the welfare of that body, so each member of the body of Christ

contributes the operation of its spiritual gift to the welfare of that spiritual body.

**A. They are the media by which love is expressed** (verses 9, 10). Christian love is more than a feeling of affection or good will. It is a commitment to serve, a willingness to “*spend and be spent*” for brothers and sisters in Christ (II Corinthians 12: 15). Ministering to others by teaching, exhorting, giving, showing mercy, and the other spiritual gifts, is an expression of true Christian love.

(1) It is sincere: “*let love be without dissimulation*” (verse 9). It is pure, genuine, unfeigned. The Holy Spirit creates an “*unfeigned love of the brethren*” by which believers “*love one another with a pure heart fervently*” (I Peter 1:22). Real love is indicated by service.

(2) It is discerning: “*abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good*” (verse 9). Christian love does not approve wrong just because it loves. It hates evil (1 Peter 3:11). It loves the sinner while hating the sin. The gift is used to lift one to God, not to console him in sin.

(3) It is tender: “*be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love*” (verse 10). Christian love causes one to deal tenderly with others. The gift of prophecy will condemn sin, but it will do it in love for the sinner. Harshness is never of God.

(4) It is humble: “*in honour preferring one another*” (verse 10). Each Christian must respect his peers and be willing for the other to be more honored than he. Each must show honor by setting the other above himself. That is true humility. When Christians love like that (sincerely, discerningly, tenderly, humbly), there will be little conflict in the body. Each gift can be exercised without pride on the part of him who has the gift and without jealousy or embarrassment on the part of him who receives the ministry of the gift. Love is beautifully expressed in the exercise of spiritual gifts.

**B. They are the media by which service is rendered** (verses 11, 12). The teacher teaches, the exhorter exhorts, the giver gives, and each gift functions for the benefit of the body.

(1) They overcome indolence: “*not slothful in business*” (verse 11). Knowing that God has enabled one to serve, he must never be slack in earnestness or lazy in work. The greatest motive to stir one up to serve the Lord is that He has given the ability to render effective service in His name. That rises above laziness or neglect.

(2) They encourage zeal: “*fervent in spirit*” (verse 11). To be fervent means to be on fire, to glow. In a Christian context, it means to be aglow with the Spirit. Enthusiasm moves the Christian because God has gifted him

to serve. How could he be content to let one day pass without being involved in the ministry for which God has enabled him?

(3) They enable service: “*serving the Lord*” (verse 11). God requires that we fear Him, walk in all His ways, and love Him and serve Him with all our hearts and souls (Deuteronomy 10:12). We serve God by serving people in the things of God. Our spiritual gift is but equipment for service. God has enabled us; so let us serve Him diligently.

(4) They produce joy: “*rejoicing in hope*” (verse 12). The Christian serves with joy because he knows that the God who has gifted him will reward his efforts. He rejoices in the hope of the harvest. There would be neither joy nor hope if there were no gifting by the Holy Spirit.

5) They sustain patience: “*patient in tribulation*” (verse 12). If one's ministry is rejected or opposed, the person who is sure of his spiritual gift will continue patiently through it all. He will not give up in despair. He holds himself in control, exercising patience, and keeps on serving Jesus.

(6) They promote prayer: “*continuing instant in prayer*” (verse 12). Why pray if one is already gifted? Because the gift does not empower itself. God the Father puts power into the exercise of the gift to make it fruitful (I Corinthians 12:6). The Christian prays for an opportunity to serve, for divine direction in service, and for God to bless the service done. Spiritual gifts are vitally related to a life of prayer.

**C. They are the media by which hospitality is shown** (verse 13). Hospitality is a blessed Christian exercise recommended in both the Old and New Testaments. It takes two forms.

(1) Hospitality meets needs: “*distributing to the necessity of the saints*” (verse 13). Governmental programs to aid the needy have resulted in the church neglecting that blessed ministry. But it is by benevolence, that the heart of God is shown through His people. The Bible says that whoever has pity and gives to the poor lends to the Lord, and what he has invested will be paid to him again (Proverbs 19:17). Human needs provide opportunities to exercise the gifts of giving, counseling, exhorting, serving, showing mercy, and others. Use your gift to meet material and spiritual needs of people about you.

(2) Hospitality provides fellowship: “*given to hospitality*” (verse 13). The household of Stephanus “*addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints*” (I Corinthians 16:15). They loved and respected one another because of that. Practice hospitality in your own church. Notice how fellowship will increase and how many opportunities God will provide for you to use your spiritual gift.

**D. They promote unity** (verses 14-16). If your church is suffering

from disunity, the gifts are not being used properly. When each member of the spiritual body ministers his gift to other members, it causes an *“increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”* (Ephesians 4:16). Spiritual gifts promote unity in all areas of church life.

(1) There is unity of action as we bless one another, even when differences arise (verse 14). We forbear one another and forgive one another if one has a quarrel against another (Colossians 3:13).

(2) There is unity of emotion as we weep together over things which cause grief and rejoice together over things that bring joy (verse 15). All members share the joy or sorrow that one member experiences (1 Corinthians 12:26).

(3) There is unity of thought as we are *“of the same mind one toward another”* (verse 16). We speak the same thing with no divisions among us.

(4) There is unity of ambition because we *“mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate”* (verse 16). No one uses his gift for selfish ends. Each is concerned about the other more than himself. Thus the body works in coordination, and God's will is done through its members.

## **II. SPIRITUAL GIFTS OUTSIDE THE BODY OF CHRIST** **(Romans 12:17-21)**

Spiritual gifts can minister to people outside the family of God and be a witness to salvation in Christ. How do the gifts govern our relationships with the unsaved?

**A. They prohibit retaliation:** *“recompense to no man evil for evil”* (verse 17). Even when opposed, the Christian remembers that he *“must not strive; but be gentle unto all men”* (II Timothy 2:24). Being struck, he turns the other cheek; being sued for the possession of his coat, he gives his cloke also (Matthew 5:38-42). He might suffer present loss, but it will open the door for ministry at some future day. To retaliate for wrong will close the door to any spiritual ministry to the wrongdoer.

**B. They encourage honesty:** *“provide things honest in the sight of all men”* (verse 17). Who will trust a man thought to be a cheat, a liar, or a thief? No one. So the Christian must be above reproach in the eyes of everyone. God calls for honesty in all areas of life (Leviticus 19:35, 36). That opens the door for the ministry of one's gift.

**C. They promote peace:** *“live peaceably with all men”* (verse 18). When others are antagonistic, the Christian must follow after peace and let the peace of God rule in his heart (Colossians 3:15). If he keeps calm, he

may have opportunity to serve. The wrath of man never works the righteousness of God (James 1:20).

**D. They prohibit vengeance:** *“avenge not yourselves. but rather give place unto wrath”* (verse 19). Vengeance is returning evil for evil. That is strictly forbidden to the Christian (I Thessalonians 5:15). He can never use his spiritual gift in service if he is concerned about finding an opportunity to “get even” with one who has wronged him. A desire to minister will overcome any desire to seek revenge.

**E. They encourage good for evil:** *“if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink”* (verse 20). Returning good for evil is so unlike the world and so like Jesus that it often opens the way for a spiritual ministry. Encourage, console, guide, or render whatever other ministry is appropriate to one who opposes you. Watch God bless it for good. It may be that God allows a problem to arise just to give you an opportunity to use your spiritual gift in that situation. Be ready.

**F. They assure victory:** *“be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good”* (verse 21). The person who lets evil get the better of him will never be an effective servant of God. But to be and do good in all situations will cause evil to be overcome with good. God did not give you a spiritual gift so you could use it in a sheltered religious environment. It is to be used in the church and out, to the saved and unsaved. Identify your gift; develop it; and use it. It enables you to serve both God and man. People about you need the ministry of your spiritual gift.

## Questions

1. What is the underlying theme of Romans 12?
2. How do verses 9~21 relate to spiritual gifts?
3. How do spiritual gifts enable Christians to serve one another?
4. How is the use of spiritual gifts a sign of Christian love?
5. How is service to God rendered through spiritual gifts?
6. How is prayer related to an exercise of spiritual gifts?
7. How is hospitality manifest through some of the gifts?
8. What place does benevolence have in the use of spiritual gifts?
9. How are spiritual gifts a witness to the unsaved?
10. What spiritual gift do you have to use for Jesus this week?