

103. The Book of Romans 12:3-6

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

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(10-1-25)

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As we come to Chapter 12 in our study of the Book of Romans—we move into the application portion of the epistle.

Romans Chapters 1-11 dealt with *doctrine*; and now Chapters 12-15 will focus on *duty*.

VI. Application: The Behavior of God's Righteousness (Chapters 12:1–15:13)

As we said last time, verses 3-21 deals with Christian *conduct* (in general) within the Church—whereas verses 3-8 falls under the category of “*Serving through Spiritual Gifts*.”

The subject of spiritual gifts is mentioned specifically in 3 passages in the New Testament: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11; but the classic chapters are 1 Corinthians 12 and 14.

Romans 12:3 (NKJV)

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

One author,

“No gift is self-sufficient and none is unnecessary—when we realize all this, we are thinking soberly (12:3).”

The first place this is to be manifested is in the local church.

One pastor had this to say with regard to spiritual gifts—

“Paul will soon speak about how we should exercise spiritual gifts in the body of Christ; but a preface warning about humility is in order, given the inordinate pride that often arises from those who regard themselves as spiritually gifted.

We should remember that spiritual giftedness does not equal spiritual maturity. Just because a person has substantial spiritual gifts does not mean that they are necessarily spiritually mature or a worthy example to imitate.

He urges us to be humble in exercising our gifts. We should never have exaggerated ideas of our own importance. Neither should we be envious of others. Rather, we should realize that each person is unique and that we all have an important function to perform for our Lord. We should be happy with the place God has dealt to us in the Body, and we should seek to exercise our gifts with all the strength that God supplies...

Our gifts are exercised by faith in the One who gave them to us to use for His glory. We have all received a measure of faith—it's up to us to exercise it so that it will grow and become stronger or do nothing with it and it will shrivel and die.”

In other words, use your gifts or lose your gifts!

Romans 12:4–5 (NKJV)

⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

The human body is one body but has many *members*—yet each one has a unique role to play. The health and welfare of the body (physical) depends on the proper functioning of each member—which is absolutely true when we talk about the health and effectiveness of the Body of Christ (the local church—Ephesians 4:11-16).

In verses 4-5 Paul mentions, **unity** (one body), **diversity** (many), and **interdependency** (members of one another).

As we said last time, the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts—not to puff up our pride or to profit from—but to use in service to God to build His Kingdom and edify the Body of Christ. Paul now gives instructions for the use of certain **gifts**.

The list does not cover all the **gifts**—it is meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. Our **gifts** differ **according to the grace that is given to us**. In other words, God's **grace** determines what gifts are given to various people depending on the ministry He is calling them to do for Him.

Along with the gifts, God gives the necessary strength and ability to use whatever **gifts** we have—which means we are responsible to use these God-given abilities as good stewards.

Romans 12:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

The gift of prophecy

The first thing we need to clarify is the difference between the **gift of prophecy** and the **office of a prophet**.

In both the Old and New Testaments, we see prophets of God. In the Old Testament that would include men like Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, etc. The word '*prophet*' comes from a Hebrew word that literally means "*to bubble forth*"—but the idea was you were "*speaking on behalf of another*".

In the Book of Exodus when God commanded Moses to go to Pharaoh and speak to him on behalf of God Moses was resistant because he had some kind of speech impediment and couldn't talk very well. God told him to take his brother Aaron who would be his "*prophet*"—or in other words his spokesman. (Exodus 7:1)

However, in particular, a prophet was someone who was a spokesman for God—unless of course the person was a *false* prophet.

Now, we make the mistake of thinking that prophesy is only *foretelling* or predicting the future—that was part of what a prophet did when God sent them to speak on His behalf.

But most of what the prophets did when they spoke for God was simply to *declare* His words to His people—in other words most of their ministry consisted not in '*foretelling*' but in 'forth-telling'—as in '*speaking forth the Word of God*' ("*Turn from your idols and serve the true and living God!*", etc.).

In the Old Testament, God said that they would know a false prophet from a true prophet in a couple of ways—

Deuteronomy 18:20-22 (NKJV)

²⁰ But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' ²¹ And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?'-- ²² when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that *is* the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (NKJV)

¹ "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, ² and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'--which you have not known--and let us serve them,' ³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. ⁵ But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn *you* away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

Now in the New Testament the office of a prophet was continued on—

Ephesians 4:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

In the New Testament we see Agabus mentioned as a prophet in the Book of Acts as well as the four daughters of Phillip (Acts 21:9)—also:

Acts 13:1 (NKJV)

¹ Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

- The prophets, unlike the Apostles who were sent out, remained in the local churches to minister and to teach doctrine.
- The prophets sometimes spoke revelation from God (Acts 11:21–28) but often they simply expounded the revelation of NT doctrine already given through the apostles.

Sometimes they would foretell the future—

Acts 11:27-28 (NKJV)

²⁷ And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Acts 21:10-11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

¹¹ When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his *own* hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy

Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.' "

So sometimes they did speak of future things but most often they simply spoke forth the Word of God and expounded it in the local church.

As we have said before, the offices of apostles and prophets have passed off of the scene. The ministries of apostles and New Testament prophets were primarily concerned with the foundation of the church—

Ephesians 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.

In verse 20 when Paul said that the Church was built, “... *on the foundation of the apostles and prophets...*”—he was simply saying that the apostles and N.T. prophets were divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit and given God’s revelation of N.T. doctrine that the Church is built upon.

This doctrine was eventually written down and became the N.T. Scriptures. The foundation of a building needs to be laid only once—and then the structure is built upon it. The apostles and prophets did this work once for all—that is why the offices of apostles and prophets have passed off the scene.

However, don’t confuse the *office* of a prophet with the *gift of prophecy*.

The gift of prophecy is still very much alive and active in the Church today—that is in the churches that believe this gift is still around today.

Although in many charismatic and Pentecostal churches it is often abused, where too many are not really speaking on behalf of God but are merely speaking out of the imagination of their own hearts—which is reminiscent of what was going on in Jeremiah’s day—

Jeremiah 23:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the Lord.

Jeremiah 23:25-26; 28-30 (NKJV)

²⁵ "I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' ²⁶ How long will *this* be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed *they are* prophets of the deceit of their own heart,... ²⁸ "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What *is* the chaff to the wheat?" says the Lord. ²⁹ "Is not My word like a fire?" says the Lord, "And like a hammer *that* breaks the rock in pieces? ³⁰ "Therefore behold, I *am* against the prophets," says the Lord, "who steal My words everyone from his neighbor.

Today in the church we have many who claim to speak on behalf of God but who are simply ‘*tickling ears*’—in other words, they’re telling people what they want to hear so as to make ‘merchandise’ (money) off of them—

2 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift

destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

This is always a characteristic of false prophets and teachers—their main goal is to *‘line their pockets’* off of God’s people.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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