

ROMANS – LIVING BY FAITH
LOVING GOD AND LIVING GODLY – Chapters 12-14

LESSON 43 – THE MIND OF THE CHRISTIAN – Romans 12:3-8

We define sickness in the human body as the condition of one or more parts failing to function as it should and weakness and suffering are the result. The same is true with the body of Christ. When Christians don't serve in the areas where they are gifted, the whole church suffers. This lesson will show us the purpose of our spiritual gifts.

Verses 1 and 2 taught us that we are to be living sacrifices to God. Here in verses 3-8 we learn what that means in a practical way. God has given each of us a unique way to serve Him in this world. It is entirely inconsistent with Scripture for a person to be totally committed to God without also using their gifts in service to Him. If we have

sacrificed our lives for Him and are in the process of being transformed from the inside out, then we will have some means of carrying out our devotion to Him in this world.

How We Should Think About Our Calling

When we present our bodies to the Lord as a living sacrifice, it must be done with an attitude of humility. Pride is the reason Christians don't die to themselves and live sacrificially for Jesus. A humble spirit is what we should expect to find in someone who makes this commitment.

Paul is an example of the humility that he talks about to the believers in Rome and he knows that the grace of God is the source of humility. He wants Christians to be humble in light of their receipt of the grace of God. Every Christian should think clearly about their life. Is there anyone who has been saved in some other way besides receiving the mercy and grace of God? We've received mercy from God and if that isn't enough, we've received grace from God to minister on His behalf as well.

Humility means not to think of ourselves more highly than we should. Pride needs to be removed from our lives. Galatians 6:3, "If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves." Whatever we have, even our spiritual gifts and abilities, has come from God. So if God gives each of us something specific to do and all of it by His grace, then there is no reason for us to think more highly of ourselves than we should.

No Christian has all the gifts of the Spirit...Jesus did...but we don't. Each of us does have at least one gift so that together the body of Christ can fulfill His work here in this world. We are to use our own gifts as well as recognize the gifts God has given others.

Gifts were given for us to use them in service to others...not for admiring them or bragging about them. Those who receive God's grace and then act with pride over what they've received, will find themselves in trouble with God.

How We Should Think About Our Church

In verse 3, we see how Christians should think about themselves and now in verses 4 and 5 how they should think about their church. First, we must understand that the church is not a building...it is a living thing made up of all Christians.

The human body is a great example of how the church is supposed to function. The church has many members and that alone is a good reason to recognize the importance of spiritual gifts. When we look around our local churches and see people who aren't involved in God's work, it means there's someone who needs what that person has been gifted to do but is not getting it. Every part of the body of Christ is important just like every part of the human body is important. There are actually two people who fail to receive blessings when a Christian won't use their gifts...the person who has the gift and the person who needs the ministry of that gift.

There is only one body of Christ but there is a diversity of gifts within that body. Jesus prayed that all His followers might be one just as He and the Father are one. It is the diversity in the body of Christ that illustrates its unity. There is a spiritual unity that connects believers wherever they go in the world because we are all part of the same body.

The body of Christ is diverse but not uniform. There is a variety of people in the church who...in God's sight...should fit together like the pieces of a puzzle. It is the diversity in the body of Christ that makes life as a Christian exciting. Think how boring it would be if we were all exactly the same.

When every person in the body of Christ recognizes with humility who they are and what God has gifted them to do, the church is able to accomplish the work of Christ in the world. Every single person...with their gifts...is crucial to the body of Christ.

How We Should Think About Our Contribution

We've looked at the individual Christian and the church. We are going to finish this lesson by looking at how the individual Christian should think about their contribution to the church based on the gifts they've received from God. There are seven spiritual gifts listed in verses 6 – 8. The first 4 are gifts used for getting out the message of the Gospel.

Prophecy is a gift used to speak out the truth of God as a teacher or preacher for the edification and instruction of others. Because the Word of God is complete, prophets today do not have the gift of foretelling the future, but of proclaiming the truth contained in the Word.

Ministry or Service is the gift of putting feet on the Gospel message. This is something everyone should do to a certain extent but something someone gifted will do with special grace.

Teaching is a gift for the purpose of explaining the truth of God. People with this gift study the Bible diligently and search out what the church needs to be taught in a way that is encouraging to them.

Exhortation is the gift of causing the listener to be convicted about doing what the Word of God says. It's not just teaching...it's teaching with the goal of action and transformation. A person with this gift will have a word of encouragement or direction...an answer to the "What do I do now?" question.

The next 3 gifts are those used to extend the ministry of the Gospel. They are used to take the truth and further impact the lives of people.

People with the gift of **Giving** love to give and mind giving sacrificially. The story of Barnabas in Acts 4 is a great example of someone who had this gift. Of course, the story of Ananias and Sapphira from Acts 5 is an example of those who clearly didn't have this gift.

There is always a need for godly **Leaders**. People with the gift of leadership will always have others following them. If no one is following you, this probably isn't your gift.

The gift of **Mercy** is the Spirit given ability to extend love and compassion to those who are suffering. It is reaching out to those whom others ignore.

I hope you know what God has gifted you to do and that you are doing it. The only way the church will be strong and healthy is for each member to do their part. When you minister with the Spirit's gifts for you, both you and the church will be blessed.