

The Gift of Serving --- Romans 12:6-8

August 16, 2020

6Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Introduction

As we begin this morning I want to focus your attention on the fact that the Church was born out of persecution. Jesus assures those who would be His disciples that they will suffer persecution and hardships for His name sake. He told His disciples that they would be hated by the world, persecuted and killed for His name sake.

Luke 6:22-23 Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. 23Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said to you, "A slave is not greater than his master." If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.

Revelation 12:11 refers to believers who were willing to lose even their lives as followers of Christ, *"And they overcame Satan because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death."*

We could spend all morning going through the book of Acts considering how the birth of the church was in the midst of great persecution. The history of the Church ever since then has been primarily a history of persecution.

It is within this context of persecution that Paul writes to the Corinthians and Romans and other epistles concerning spiritual gifts and how the Church is to minister to one another. I mention this because, no matter what may come to the Church in America or across this globe, it is the proclamation of the Word of God and the building up of the Church in the exercise of spiritual gifts that will sustain her in the midst of persecution.

What we have learned about spiritual gifts over the last few weeks and months

is in the context of the imagery of a human body. We are the body of Christ and each one plays a role just as the members of a human body all work together.

Several years ago, two students graduated from the Chicago-Kent College of Law. The highest ranking student in the class was a blind man named Overton. When he received his honor, he insisted that half the credit should go to his friend, Casperzak. They had met one another in school when the Mr. Casperzak who had no arms, guided the blind Mr. Overton down a flight of stairs. This acquaintance grew into friendship and a beautiful example of interdependence. The blind man carried the books, and the armless man read them aloud in their common study.

And so their strengths and weaknesses complimented and compensated each other. After their graduation, they went on to practice law together. What a picture of interdependence and the great result of working together. God has so designed the Church to operate together. Alone, we are useless; but together, God uses us to accomplish His desired ends.

Last week we wrapped up our study of 1 Corinthians 13 which teaches us about the vital role of love in the Church and in our exercising our spiritual gifts to minister to one another. We considered both the necessity and the character of love. We saw if your motive is not love, then you produce nothing of value in the Church; you are of no value to the Church; and you gain or profit nothing for the Church.

Furthermore we considered in detail what it means to be patient and kind. We also saw that love is not jealous or arrogant . . . love does not seek its own . . . is not provoked to anger . . . and does not keep a record of how people have offended you. If you have not listen to those studies, I would encourage you to do so. We now return to the jumping off point in Romans 12 that lead us to this focused study of spiritual gifts.

Review

I want to remind you of the context of our study in Romans 12:3-5, *“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. ⁴For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”*

We have considered that there are a number of important small words in these verses that are easily overlooked. One of those words is “for” found at the beginning of verses 3 and 4. “For” is important because it connects this whole section beginning in verses 1 and 2 that spoke of offering yourself a living sacrifice in worship of Christ, and the renewing of your mind in the Word of God. Functioning in the attitude of offering self as a living sacrifice to God is vital as we continue to study the subject of spiritual gifts.

Another small, important word that is repeated is the word “one”; “*we have many members in **one** body, we are **one** body in Christ, members of **one** another.*” So dying to self, renewing our minds, humility, spiritual gifts and the unity of the Church are all tied together.

This mindset centers around humility. We considered that Paul never lost sight of who he was before Christ intersected his life on the road to Damascus. He wrote to Timothy towards the end of his life in 1 Timothy 1:15-16, “*It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. ¹⁶Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.*”

We saw that if you have not been humbled by the Gospel, then you have not encountered the biblical gospel of Jesus Christ. Humility is a key characteristic of believers. It is not all about you; it is all about Christ. So we pick up our study of individual spiritual gifts as we return to Romans 12. We have already considered the gift of prophecy found in the preceding verse, verse 6, during our study of 1 Corinthians 12. So that brings us next to verse 7.

The Gift of Serving

*Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us,
each of us is to exercise them accordingly . . . if service, in his serving*

Romans 12:6a, 7a

I want to continue to break down each gift that we encounter them in the text which brings us to the gift of serving or service. I want to ask and answer the questions: What does “service” mean? What is the gift of service?

What does “service” mean? The Kingdom of Christ is exactly opposite to man’s. In Luke 22:25-27, Jesus said, “*The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; ²⁶But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who*

reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves." In man's economy the greatest is the one who is served, however, in God's kingdom, the greatest is the one who serves. Jesus, who is the greatest, is the one serving.

Matthew 20:28 ". . . just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Matthew 23:11 "But the greatest among you shall be your servant."

The word used for "service" is *διακονία* (from which we get our word deacon) which has a number of references. It can refer to: 1) general service of any kind; 2) can refer to charitable giving, i.e. aid, support, arrangement for provision; 3) refer to preparing meals, and serving them; 4) refer to the role or position of one serving God in a special way, i.e. the office of deacon or ministry.

It often has the connotation of service rendered to benefit and to help others. A desire to help others is the sole motive of this kind of service, apart from any obligation. It is helpful, voluntary service without coercion.

There are a variety of ways that this word is used in reference to service. Which brings us to ask the question, "What exactly is the gift of Service?" Because the term is so broad, it is helpful to see if Paul may use a term in another list of spiritual gifts that is close to the meaning here, but may give further insight.

1 Corinthians 12:28 *And God has appointed in the Church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.*

The gifts of helps refers to giving assistance and helpful deeds. It paints the picture of taking the burden off someone else and placing it onto oneself. Paul uses the term in Acts 20:35, *"In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*"

This gift of helps or service consists of an unusual ability to know how people's needs are best met and an unusual skill in meeting those needs. Not every Christian has that know-how and skill. John MacArthur writes, "The gift of helps/service is not glamorous or showy and, as in the Corinthian church, often is not highly prized or appreciated. But it is God's gift, and its faithful ministry is highly prized by Him."

Following is an important footnote. We are all called to serve one another. It is not that anyone can say, "Oh well, my gift is not service therefore I cannot serve others."

Galatians 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

As with many of the gifts, the Church as a whole is called upon to be involved with the specific function of serving even though they may not be as energized as the one who has the gift of service. For example, we are all to evangelize, however there is a gift of evangelism which is given, not only for the purpose of evangelism, but also to show the Church how they are to evangelize.

Those who have the gift of service have a heightened effectiveness. You have seen these people. They are quick to serve. They have a desire to serve and are joyful in serving. They are behind the scenes people who are happy to get no recognition.

The nature of this gift is that it is an unsung service; it generally goes unnoticed. It is not because this is any less vital to the healthy functioning of the body, because in reality the body is crippled without them. Service is as indispensable as teaching, evangelism, and exhortation.

Transition: So the gift of service is vital to the church. It involves waiting on tables, ministering the Word of God, or any ministry in general. Next is the gift of teaching.

The Gift of Teaching

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly . . . if service, in his serving; or he who teaches in his teaching; . . .

Romans 12:6a, 7

Verse 7 says, "or he who teaches in his teaching." I want to cover 3 considerations pertaining to this gift: first, what is the gift of teaching? Second, the importance of teaching; and third, the general obligation for all to teach.

Teaching is defined this way—to cause another to understand, making things plain; to provide instruction by way of imparting knowledge or by example. The gift of teaching differs from the gift of prophecy in that prophecy included the direct revelation of God's Word to the prophet, but teaching involves the clear exposition of that which had already been revealed.

The gift of teaching consists of an ability to grasp, arrange, and present revealed truth effectively and in an organized manner so that those listening have a better understanding of the Scripture that is being taught. Because a teacher expounds the revealed Word, a teacher is given to study. I was talking to a young man not long ago who wants to go into full time ministry. He told me that he does not like to study. I had to tell him that reading and studying takes the majority of a pastor's time. A teacher is not one who invents new doctrine but makes clear what God has already given.

Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Tim 2:15, *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.”*

The gift of teaching includes the ability to understand the text, arrange thoughts, and communicate them to others in a meaningful manner. The result of the gift of teaching will be a better comprehension of that passage under consideration. It is similar to the statement in Nehemiah 8:7-8 that says, *“The priest and Levites . . . explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. And they read from the book, from the law of God, translating (interpreting) to give the sense so that they understood the reading.”*

So the gift of teaching includes the ability to study, not to invent the truth. It involves a heightened ability to grasp and present the truth in a manner that makes the meaning plain. But, that is only a part of the gift of teaching. There is another facet to teaching than just relaying the facts, and that is teaching by example.

In Greek culture, a teacher conveyed practical knowledge with a view to a gradual, systematic application to life. It was not for the purpose of making one more knowledgeable for the sake of knowledge. It was with a view to hearing the truth, responding to truth, and then implementing it into your life.

Within ancient civilizations there was a much closer bond between student and teacher than in our modern society. A young person would learn at his mother and father's feet for a time, then in his early teens would go and join himself to an instructor in a given field. The whole concept of teaching had overtones of following the example of the one teaching.

The gift of teaching involves an exemplary life. One's whose life supports what he teaches.

Ezra was a good example of a teacher. It says in Ezra 7:10, *“For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.”*

Jesus was the perfect example of a teacher. He lived out what He taught among His disciples. In fact, Jesus condemned the Pharisees and Scribes who did not practice what they taught.

Matthew 23:1-3 *Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, “The Scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them.”*

The Gospels consistently refer to Jesus as a teacher. We find that Jesus transferred this ministry of teaching to His disciples and the Church as seen in Matthew 28:19, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

The denomination in which I grew up, for all practical purposes, saw the purpose of the Church as only verse 19, namely evangelism and baptism. But making disciples does not stop with the stirring of the baptismal waters. It includes the process of transferring a body of knowledge and a way of living to the disciple.

So it is no surprise in Acts 5:42 that is exactly what we find the apostles doing. *“And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”*

Paul is an example of Christ's mandate to make disciples and teach. In Acts 11:25-26, it says, *“Barnabus left for Tarsus to look for Saul (Paul); and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”* Also in Acts 18:11 we see another example of Paul discipling: *“ . . . settled in Corinth a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”*

Paul understood that teaching included living an exemplary life which could be followed. We read in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-7, *“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition (teachings) which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our*

example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you”

Paul instructs Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:11-13, *“Prescribe and teach these things. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.”*

This gives us some insight into why an elder in a local body must have attained to a certain level of being beyond reproach in his character and lifestyle. People will learn from the church leaders' lives as much as what they formally teach. The requirements of an elder are definitely against the foolish saying “do as I say not as I do.”

For example, when a man stands up to teach concerning materialism, he is not to have the reputation as a lover of money. His life would contradict his teaching. Furthermore, this is why the majority of criteria for an elder is one of character. Not that he is perfect, but that there is no glaring charge that can be brought against him. This is not only for the elder, but also for anyone who would stand and teach.

James 3:1-2 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many ways.

Teaching is giving instruction which simply put is making the Scriptures easy to understand. It is not just the conveyance of factual material, but it assumes that the teacher is one who strives to exemplify what is taught. Jesus was the perfect example and He passed this responsibility down to the Church. So that is the gift of teaching. I want to consider for a moment the importance of teaching.

The New Testament makes it quite clear that the development of a believer's understanding of the Word of God is vital in the process of spiritual growth. Teaching doctrine is foundational to Christianity.

Colossians 2:6-7 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, (how did this happen) just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

Dr. Robert Thomas writes, “Teaching, learning, and implementing doctrine is the lifeblood of the Christian faith because without doctrine Christianity is nonexistent. The subjective element of trusting Christ for salvation and obeying Him in service is essential to being a Christian, but without doctrine a person

knows nothing of what to believe in, or how to obey.”

Ephesians 4:11-15 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. ¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, . . .

Two of the churches in Revelation were reprimanded because they allowed false teachers in their midst. They were not steadfast in teaching.

In sum, teaching is more than just relaying facts, it is transferring the truth of God’s Word exemplified in a life that is striving to be consistent with the content of the message. The result is that the church is to be the pillar and support of the truth, no longer tossed around by every new teaching that comes along. So we have considered the gift of teaching and the importance of teaching.

Lastly, I want to remind you that we are all to be teachers. Everyone is to be teaching. Colossians 3:16 commands this, *“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you (you are to be studying), with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

Fathers, you are to be teaching your family. Ephesians 6:4, *“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”*

Older women are to teach younger women. Titus 2:3-5 *“Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ⁴that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.”*

So we all have the privilege and obligation to teach. There is a gift of teaching in which those who possess that gift are able to do it with more effectiveness and have a greater desire to study and to teach.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to introduce a gift that is closely related to teaching, but not the same as the gift of teaching, namely the gift of pastor/teacher. There are those who both teach and pastor also—the shepherd/teacher

Ephesians 4:11-12 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ

The word here is ποιμήν and it means shepherd. Only in Ephesians 4 is it translated “pastor” everywhere else it is translated “shepherd.” Pastor is the Latin word for “shepherd.”

The manner in which this gift is referred in Ephesians 4 makes it clear that the abilities of a teacher and a shepherd are closely related and combined into one. Add to the gift of teaching the ability to shepherd the body and you have the gift of pastor/teacher.

Shepherding involves much more than just teaching. Shepherding should not be reduced to just preaching and teaching. It involves a broader concern of care for the whole person that presupposes a consistent relationship with those in the flock.

The concept of shepherding was deeply engrained within the Jewish people, but sadly in the history of the nation, we find that there were those who came into leadership who were wicked shepherds. For example, Ezekiel 34 provides an example of shepherds who did not take care of the flock.

Ezekiel 34:1-5 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? ³You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. ⁴Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. ⁵And they were scattered for lack of a shepherd”’”

We learn from this passage that wicked shepherds:

- Do not feed the flock. They do not give the flock direction in the truth.

- Care only for themselves.
- Do not strengthen those who are weak.
- Do not attempt to bring healing to those who are sick and broken in spirit.
- Do not go after those who stray.
- They rule with force and try to dominate the flock.

The greatest example of a good shepherd is Jesus Christ Himself. Christ is the Highest Example of a Shepherd. Matthew opens his gospel with a reference to Christ using an Old Testament quote in Matthew 2:6, *“AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER, WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.”*

Hebrews 13:20 *Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord*

1 Peter 2:25 *For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.*

We see the heart of a shepherd in Jesus in Matthew 9:36, *“And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.”* Like all the gifts, the Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect example of a shepherd.

Conclusion

Jesus told Peter to shepherd the flock. And Peter shared that responsibility to elders in the Church.

1 Peter 5:1-3 *Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.*

Elders are to give direction. Elders are not to dominate the flock. They are exhorted to lead in truth and provide an example. We will pick it up there next week.

The Holy Spirit has given some the gift of serving. They eagerly serve the Church as unto the Lord. He has given some the ability to teach. They have a good grasp on the truth. They desire to study, to live by the truth and to teach the truth. Along with teaching, the Holy Spirit has given some the desire to shepherd the flock. They have a care for the flock. They do not drive the flock like cattle, but lead them as a shepherd.

The Lord commands us to function in our giftedness for the sake of the Church. When we do, it is amazing what we can accomplish. When we neglect our giftedness, then the Church suffers.

