

### 35. Learning About the Gifts God Gives for Service

In the first eleven chapters of Romans, we have seen that God has made salvation available to all people whether those people are Jews or Gentiles. However, each person has to choose to receive that salvation by faith. We see that God is the One that has given us the faith to believe. In the coming group of topics, we are going to see how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to act in faith once they have placed their faith in Christ. As Ephesians 2:8-10 says, we have been saved by faith and created for good works. We are going to see how God makes it possible for each Christian to carry out the good works that He has created us to do.

In Romans 12:1-2, we read, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Since Romans 11:36 concluded the previous chapter by saying, “For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.”, we see here that we are encouraged to present our bodies to God so that we can bring glory to God. We have seen in the previous eleven chapters that God has shown His mercy. Now, we see that God calls us to respond by presenting our bodies to Him.

We also see that we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. In the Old Testament, the people brought their sacrifices and presented them to the Lord as a covering for their sins. However, Christ presented Himself as our sacrifice to take away our sin. As a result, we see that our response is to present our bodies to Christ to carry out the will of Christ on this earth. The word translated “present” is also used twice in Romans 6:13 where we read, “And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.” Then, Romans 6:19 adds, “I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness.” We see that we are to present our bodies to the Lord so that He can give us His strength to live holy lives.

As Christians, we have been given a new nature that has a desire to do good instead of living to satisfy self. However, that new nature is to be revealed by the lives that we live. To “be conformed to the world” means *to act like we acted before we became Christians*. Here, we see that we are to be transformed. The word that is translated “transformed” was used of Christ in Mark 9:2 where we read, “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them.” On that mountain, the three disciples saw on the outside what Christ is like on the inside. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, we see that the same thing is to happen in our lives as we are being transformed. That verse says, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” We are to reveal the glory of Christ that is within us.

We see that the way that we are transformed is by renewing our minds. Philippians 4:8-9 says,

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.” As we think the thoughts that are in the Word of God and yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit moment by moment, we see that the Lord gives us the power to be a living sacrifice because we are able to carry out the will of God in our lives.

Romans 12:3-5 goes on to say, “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. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” Here, we see one of the ways that our thinking is changed as we are being transformed. We see that we will learn to think of ourselves and the gifts that God gives us with an attitude of humility. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Some of us have been given speaking gifts and we are to use those gifts to speak the Word of God. Some of us have been given serving gifts and we are to serve in the strength that God supplies.

Each Christian is different but we are all a part of the same body. We have each been given different ministries so we do things differently but we are the same body. We are dependent on Christ and one another because we are all part of the same body. That is why Ephesians 4:15-16 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Christ is the head of the body and we are all to get our instructions from Him. He is the One who makes it possible for us to work together. As we carry out the instructions of Christ, we will all do our share. The result will be that the body will be built up in love.

Romans 12:6-8 gives a list of seven different spiritual gifts. Each Christian has been given at least one of these seven gifts. Those verses say, “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; or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” Here, we see that we are told how to use whatever gift or gifts that have been given to us by grace.

The “gift of prophecy” means *to speak forth the Word of God that has already been written down*. 1 Peter 1:10 says, “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you.” Then Jude 14-15 says, “Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their

ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” From these two verses we see that a person with the gift of prophecy will speak of the grace of God which provides salvation for all who receive it and the judgment to come for all those who reject it. This is to be according to the proportion of faith, which means that the person is to share the Word of God and not their own opinions.

The gift of ministry or service is a serving gift that focuses on practical ways to serve other Christians. In 1 Corinthians 16:15, we read, “I urge you, brethren--you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” Here, we see that this entire family had devoted themselves to serving other saints.

The word that is translated “teaching” is usually translated “doctrine”. The Christian who has this gift will focus on sound doctrine. Titus 1:9 says, “Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” Here, we see that the person who has the gift of doctrine will teach sound doctrine to encourage those who believe and to expose from the Word of God those who contradict sound doctrine.

The gift of exhortation or encouragement is a speaking gift that encourages Christians to love, to good works and to godly living by giving specific steps from the Word of God. In 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, we read, “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more.” Comparing the three speaking gifts in these verses, we see that the gift of teaching will emphasize doctrine, the gift of prophecy will emphasize reproof and the gift of exhortation will emphasize correction.

The person with the gift of giving often gives to needs that are not recognized by others. Ephesians 4:28 says, “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.” This person loves to share with those who have needs. The word that is translated “leads” means *to stand before or to lead*. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 says, “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.” The person who has the gift of leading will lead under the leadership of the Lord so that the good works of all will be profitable and fruitful.

The person who has the gift of showing mercy loves to provide comfort. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to use their spiritual gifts to serve one another to the glory of God.