

Romans 12:5-8

PREVIOUS

NEXT

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS				
Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans — 3:21-5:21	Romans — 6:1-8:39	Romans — 9:1-11:36	Romans — 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	SERVICE OF SALVATION
God's Holiness In Condemning Sin	God's Grace In Justifying Sinners	God's Power In Sanctifying Believers	God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile	God's Glory The Object of Service
Deadliness of Sin	Design of Grace	Demonstration of Salvation		
		Power Given	Promises Fulfilled	Paths Pursued
Righteousness Needed	Righteousness Credited	Righteousness Demonstrated	Righteousness Restored to Israel	Righteousness Applied
God's Righteousness IN LAW	God's Righteousness IMPUTED	God's Righteousness OBEYED	God's Righteousness IN ELECTION	God's Righteousness DISPLAYED
Slaves to Sin	Slaves to God			Slaves Serving God
Doctrine				Duty
Life by Faith				Service by Faith
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Romans 12:3-6

Romans 12:7-9

[Romans 12:5-8](#)

Our Responsibilities Under Grace - Part 4

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

Look at verse 6 of Romans chapter 12: "And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly." You and I have to present ourselves and let God renovate our minds to allow Him to bring us to a fresh understanding of what the church is all about. It is not an organization. It is an organism. It is a body. It is not just local, although there are local churches in Scripture, it is world-wide. My gift is not just for the church I pastor, but for the whole body of Christ. Your gift is not just for your church, but for the whole body of Christ. We have to allow God to empower us and lead us in our gifts in the proportion of faith that He has given to us. The measure of faith there means that He has given each of us the ability to trust Him in the proportion of gifts that He has given to us. As we do that, much joy is brought to us and God's character is manifested through us.

Now you can imagine if we all had the same gift. Thank God we don't. Thank God we don't all have the same personality. That would bore you to tears. We are all different. We are unique. I think of the Peanut's cartoon when Linus was feeling bad. One of the other characters came up to him and said, "Listen, you are like a snowflake. God has never made a snowflake like another snowflake." You can never compare yourself to anybody. You are fearfully and wonderfully made. That's a beautiful picture of how each one of us are a part of a world-wide body of Christ.

When you start seeing it that way, the organization sort of slips over to one side, and the organism rises to the surface.

A man recently came to me in a meeting that I was doing and said, "Preacher, I hear what you are saying, but you have to have organization. You have to have the by-laws and the Constitution. You have got to have a charter. You have to be legal. You have got to have business meetings. You have to have organization." What are those people who say those kinds of things so adamantly defending? If somebody defends the organization more than they defend the organism, then it is obvious that he has not gotten that realization, that renewed mind. Because when you put the organization first, it is always people at the expense of the organism. An organism by its own necessity will organize itself. Organization certainly is there. The Spirit does things decently and in order, but you don't put the organization first. You put the organism first.

But only a renewed mind can even comprehend what I have just said. It is a relationship we have to God. It is a relationship we have to each other. We minister to one another out of the specific unique gifts God has given to us. These gifts are only for inside the church body. Outside the church body we are commanded to do every single one of the gifts. We have the Giver of the gifts living in us. I am commanded to show mercy. I am commanded to serve. Those who are gifted in those areas help all of us to do what we are commanded to do much more gracefully.

You see, we need one another. It is not one of these things that says, "Well, I don't have the gift of serving. So the chairs need to be set up, get somebody with the gift of serving. I am going home." That is not what he is saying. Get yourself up there and help put those chairs up. You may not be gifted to do that, but you are commanded to do that. You have to constantly keep the balance in your mind.

The gifts are for the function of the body. It is to minister to one another. First Corinthians 12:7 gives the ground rules of all the gifts. It says, "For each one is given the manifestation to profit with all." In the Greek it leaves it open. Every person in the body of Christ is to profit from the giftedness of the body. Therefore, we don't teach the sign gifts. We teach the service gifts. Sign gifts edify the individual. Service gifts edify the body. That is what he is talking about. That is what is mentioned in Romans 12. You don't find sign gifts in Romans 12.

We don't teach the sign gifts. We teach the service gifts. We have our view towards that, and they are written very plainly. It is in the Constitution and by-laws, and we have our doctrinal statement concerning where we stand on gifts. In so many churches you don't know where they are. They are so fussy, they never say anything. "He that points in every direction points in no direction." So we had a stand. But we teach the service gifts. Why? Because the gifts are to profit the whole body. The service gifts do that. The speaking and service gifts do that.

A man came to me one year and asked me a question. He asked me, "Wayne, when does the church become a church?" That is a good question. I wanted to say, "Well, when you are chartered, when you have a constitution and by-laws, when you are legally recognized, etc." Somehow that didn't seem to answer the question, and I knew it would not.

What makes a church a church? It began to dawn on me that since the church is a body, then that church is not a functioning church unless the gifts within that church are functioning so that the character of Jesus Christ is manifested through the people who are gifted in that body and to where Jesus is getting the glory, not the people.

This is an appropriate word for the church. I think it is important for us. Come to the Word. What is the church? What is the church? It is not an organization like you know an organization. I am not the CEO. The elders are not a Board of Directors. You are not stockholders in this church. We are all by the grace of God in the body of Christ. We are localized in the sense that there are local churches. You see them all through the New Testament. But the local church is simply a miniature picture of what the whole body of Christ is to be. If you are a believer you are gifted. God wants your gift used in the body somehow, whether officially or unofficially. God will use you when you present your body and renew your mind and are willing to let Jesus be Jesus in your life. He will manifest Himself through you one way. He will manifest Himself through me another way. All of us are uniquely different. When you put it all together, you see the character of Jesus living on this earth in the bodies of the people He has delivered and rescued from themselves.

In Romans 12:6 Paul begins to list the gifts. The reason I like Romans 12 is because I think it is the purest list of gifts in the New Testament. Now I know some people disagree with that. I think in 1 Corinthians 12 he is

not teaching gifts specifically, but he is teaching the diversity of the body. He doesn't seek to make a complete list in [1Corinthians 12](#). It is a whole different subject in [1Corinthians 12](#) than what you find in Romans 12. In Ephesians 4 he is talking about the offices. He is talking about the gifted men. In 1 Peter he talks about the gifts of serving and speaking, but he mentions the gift of hospitality. I am not one of these who takes every time the word "gift" is mentioned and makes a list and says, "There are 19. There are 21 different gifts." I don't go that route. I think Romans 12 is the purest teaching on gifts you have in the New Testament.

There are seven categories of them. That's not a bad number. I think these seven are the categories where we are all somehow fitted. You may be fitted differently and certainly you will be, but these are the seven categories of gifts. I think it is so pure in line of the teaching of what Paul is bringing out. Let's look at them.

First of all he mentions in verse 6, prophecy. He says, "And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;..." Now the word "prophecy" is the word propheteia. It comes from the word prophetes, which comes from pro, before, and phemi, to tell. It means to foretell. You can certainly understand that in the early church. There were prophets just as there were in the Old Testament. Remember, they did not have the full counsel of the Word of God. It was a prophet who went to Paul and warned him of pain and discomfort when he got over to Jerusalem. So it can mean foretell. But I believe in our day and the purpose of what the church is all about, it means something else. The word there means, forth tell or to tell forth, to declare the revelation of God through His Word.

The reason I believe that is so significant is that the office is mentioned in Ephesians 2:20. I think it is very important that you see that not only that the gift is there, but the man is there. I am running a little ahead of myself. I want you to first of all see that. There is the difference between the gift and between the office. Now let's do that first and we will go back to that in a moment. The gift is what we are talking about. The office is found in [Ephesians 2:20](#), "Having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone." The prophets are relegated to the very foundation of the church along with the apostles. They have no successors. But the gift is what we are talking about: the gift of preaching. The reason I think it is is because of its restriction.

Look at verse 6 again. It says, "if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith." The word "proportion" is the word analogia. It is the word from which we get the word "analogy." It means the right relation to something. Now that something could be taken two ways. First of all you could say it is in relationship to his faith, as it is translated there in Romans 12:6 in the New American Standard. It says, "if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith." If you took it that way it would be mean that when you prophesy you do it within the confines of your ability to trust God, within the realm of your faith, the measure of faith that God has given to you. But I disagree with that. There is no "his" there. There is no pronoun there. It is "the", the definite article.

To me what he is saying is, if you prophesy, it has got to be absolutely related to the Word of God. You cannot step outside the counsel of God. So in forth telling, what you have here with the gift of prophecy is the gift of preaching. That is what he is talking about. He is talking about people who preach the revelation of God through His Word. The restriction is in what the Word of God says. We are talking about the gift now, not necessarily the man or the office. We are talking about the gift. The gift of prophecy is the ability to preach, to declare, to tell forth, the Word of God.

You say, "Now, Wayne, wait a minute. What is the difference then in a preacher and a teacher? I mean, you are going to have teaching come up in a moment. What is the difference in a person with prophecy and a person with teaching?" Here is my personal definition. With teaching, as we will see in a moment, it is geared a different way. It is geared to clarification. But with preaching, it is geared more to confrontation. It is still the Word of God. It has to be the Word of God. It has to be properly taught, properly studied and properly brought out. But it is more to confront somebody with it.

If you will study it, it is no coincidence to me that the word "prophecy" is geared and comes from the word "prophet". If you will study the prophets in Scripture, they were the ones who took the counsel of God, what God had said, and put it right in the face of the people, stirring them to have to make a decision concerning what God had said. Whereas, a teacher does not go that route. His motivation is not to confront you with it. His motivation is to clarify what he has studied to make sure you understand it. So the gift of prophecy then to me is the gift of preaching. However you look at that, let the Word of God be the authority, not what Wayne says about it. But in my study, that is what I believe. The gift of the prophecy is the gift of preaching, the telling forth, the declaring of the Word of God. And oh, how we need that.

It doesn't have to be in the pulpit. It can be in many ways. I know many people who have the gift of prophecy, the gift of taking God's Word and just putting it right in front of somebody and confronting them with truth is all about.

The second gift he mentions here is the gift of serving. In verse 7 it says, "if service, in his serving." The Greek word for "serving" is diakonia. It comes from the word diakonos. It means menial and practical service. It is the word from which we get the word "deacon." It is the word from which we get the word "ministry."

In fact, if I understand the word, the word "deacon" was never translated from diakonos. Back when the Scriptures were translated into English, the church in power at that time had deacons who had positions of power. The translators knew what the word meant. It means, "Here, your tea glass is empty. Can I give you another glass of tea? Is there anything else I can do for you?" That is all the word has ever meant. It is not a position of honor. It is a position of service. But they took the word and said, "You know, we can't translate that because if we do, we are coming against the very office that is held high in our denomination, religion. And so, therefore, we are going to change it. We are just going to transliterate it." When you transliterate a word, you make a word out of a word. So diakonos became deacon, whatever that is supposed to mean.

Can you imagine the revolution that could happen in churches if deacons could understand they are in a position of service, not in a position of honor and power, when they begin to simply take on the extra arm that others don't have to serve the people within the church? That is where the word comes from. The word "ministry" comes from the very same word.

So when you talk about serving, it is a person who seeks supernaturally to meet the practical needs of others. It does not necessarily ever have to be seen. It is a person who finds his innermost joy out of meeting the needs of others. Paul says, "if service, in his serving." Now it is apparent to me that this gift, as others, is given in the proportion of faith that is measured out to the individual. That means there may be hundreds of people with the gift of serving. Each one of them will serve in a different way. They won't all do the same or look alike, but they will all have the same motivation.

In your serving, you may have a smaller piece of the pie, therefore, you don't have as broad a gift as others have. Or you may have a bigger piece. But the Holy Spirit of God is the one who leads you and motivates you in your serving. Serving is what causes you to want to function in the body of Christ. You want to do the things that are practical and meet the practical needs of others. But a need does not justify a call. That is why you have got to remember, God is the author of these gifts and He is the one who directs them and moves them within a person. We are all uniquely gifted differently. Paul says it will be in the proportion of faith and direction that God gives to you. It won't always be the same.

There are three prepositions that we bring out from time to time and I want to bring that out. Ek is a preposition that means motion out of. Eis is preposition that means motion into, and en is the preposition that means remaining in something. That is the word used here. "if service, in his serving." Remaining in that which God has given, remaining in that which God is directing in your life. It may not be what others is, but it is the motivation of your heart and the motivation of your life.

Well, thirdly Paul mentions teaching. In verse 7 he says, "if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching." That is the word didasko. Again, here is the distinction between the gift and the office. There is the gift of teaching, just like there is the gift of the prophet, the gift of the teacher. There is the gift of teaching and then there is the gifted teacher.

[Ephesians 4:11](#) says, "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers." So we see the office, but that is not what we are talking about in Romans 12. We are talking about the gift of teaching. The teacher was appointed in biblical times, but when it comes to the gift of teaching, anyone can have the gift of teaching. It is the ability to clarify truth. I know many people who have the purest gift of teaching, but they cannot apply. I mean, they can't take it out of the heavens and put it down to where people live. You walk away saying, "Whoa! That is so clear." But as you walk away you are also thinking, "Well, what does it mean to me?" They really are not strongly gifted in bringing it down here.

The gift of prophecy and the gift of teaching in prophecy takes that same clarification of truth and confronts a person, puts it right in his face and that person is stirred and moved to do something about it. The gift of teaching is totally satisfied if you walk away having clearly understood. It is: clarifying truth, observation, interpretation, application, very careful to be detailed in content. That doesn't mean the gift of prophecy is not

gifted in content, but he takes that content and confronts folks with it. That is his motivation. It is different here.

Some people preach and teach as they preach. I mean, that can work together. It doesn't mean that you can't have both of those gifts. But the gift of teaching is the ability to clarify truth to others. A mother can teach her children and does. Older women teaching the younger women. It can be manifested in many ways.

When I was taping with Dr. Spiros Zodhiates years ago, I found out how we both really need each other. There were days in which he was explaining something to me, he so lost me I had to have a Webster's Dictionary to understand his vocabulary. But when he worked with me long enough I saw it. And once I saw it, I began to say back to him, "Brother Spiros, do you mean this can relate here in my life and here and here and here?" He would say, "Well, I never thought about that." He told me one day, "Wayne, I appreciate your gift." I was thinking, "Why would he appreciate my gift as gifted as he is?" He said, "You help me apply what I have learned to clarify. You help me bring it down to my own level, to my own life."

We need each other, folks. If you are listening to one person all the time and that is what you are building your life on, be real careful because that person does not have it all together. That person is uniquely gifted in the body of Christ, but they may not have the gift perhaps that would round that out or bring it around another way. Just get in the Word of God for yourself and see what it says. That is the clear thing.

Well, we have prophecy or preaching, serving and teaching. Then he says, "exhortation" in verse 8. He says, "or he who exhorts, in his exhortation." The word "exhorts" there is the word *parakaleo*; *para* means to motion alongside, and *kaleo* means to call; to call alongside, motion alongside. It is the gift that means to comfort or to encourage. It is a gift of coming alongside someone to comfort them or to help them with instruction.

Now listen, this is a true love gift. The Holy Spirit is called "The Comforter", the same word, in [John 14:16](#). The person with the gift of exhortation is the person in the body of Christ who just simply wants to come alongside somebody who is having difficulty with counsel, with comfort. It always involves instruction. This is not somebody who comes by and just pats you on the back. This is a spiritual gift directly associated with the Word of God. It is somebody who wants to come along beside you and comfort you and counsel you and give you practical ways in which you can take the Word and put it into your life. It is not really a pulpit gift as much as it is an individual gift out in the body, a one-on-one type of gift.

Here is where your counselors come from. I thank God for people with this gift which is manifested in that way. Some people say when they hear me preach that I have the gift of exhortation. Well, if I do, it is in the sense that I take the whole congregation and make them one person, build my own case and then answer my question before I finish preaching. I have done that a lot. I will say, "Well, you say," or "He said." You didn't say and he didn't say. I am building a case. I take it on as if I am in a conversation with somebody.

My counseling is not in a room somewhere one on one. That is not the proportion of faith that God has given to me. That is not the motivation of my heart. That doesn't mean I don't do it. But that is not the motivating drive of my life. The motivating drive of my life is in the pulpit. It is to take the Word of God, to bring it alongside you as a whole and to help you practically learn how to live it, to confront you with it, to teach you with it.

I guess they are all involved somehow. But exhortation is very, very important. It is a love gift. It is the same heartbeat as the person with the gift of mercy. The difference is mercy shows what its heartbeat is by what it does. Exhortation shows its heartbeat by what it says. A person with exhortation won't spend a whole lot of time doing something for you in that sense of the word, but he will spend a lot of time with you sharing with you the counsel of the Word of God, making it practical to help you in your walk with God.

There are many forms and sizes and shapes of exhortation, just like there are different people in the body of Christ. The motivation is the same. But each one of you who has that gift has been given a certain slice. You want to just stay within that. God will move you and motivate you in that area.

Well, prophecy, serving, teaching, exhortation, and then Paul mentions giving. I like giving. That is a good gift to talk about. Romans 12:8 reads, "or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality." Now it is interesting to me that the restriction of the gifts sort of change here. Preaching is restricted to the Word of God. The gift of serving is restricted to the proportion of faith given, to the leading of God in the individual's life. The same with teaching, the same with exhortation. But giving is restricted to liberality. Now the word "giving" means to give with good intentions, for the good will of somebody else. But the word "liberality" doesn't mean liberality as we see it. I can see why they translated it that way. Let me explain it.

The word for "he who gives" is *metadidomi*. *Meta* at the front of the word expresses an association with

something or someone. Obviously, the person who is the recipient of the gift. Liberality is the word haplotēs. It means not to have a double motive. It involves sincerity and purity of motive. So you have "giving" being not just didōmi, but metadidōmi, which means you are associated with the person you are giving to. Then you have the word liberality, which is the word haplotēs. It is the word that means not liberality but sincerity. In other words, a person with the gift of giving is a person who gives, but he gives with no double motive at all. He gives out of sincerity. There are no strings attached to his giving.

You see, we are living in a day when money is power. Some people, even in churches, will use their money as leverage to get something done they want to get done. They will stop their giving if they don't like something in the church and start designating it to something else. They use their money as a way of sending a signal that they are displeased. Well, they don't understand the counsel of the Word of God. First of all, when you give, you don't give to the church, you give to God. Whatever the church does with it is between them and God. God will take care of that. You see, we have to get that on our minds first. Whenever you give, you are not giving to the church. You are giving to the Lord Jesus Christ in the specific way His Holy Spirit directs you to give. Now, if you are not doing that, keep on giving, we need the money, but I mean you are not doing it right. True giving is not giving to the church, it is giving to the Lord.

I hear people all the time saying, "Well, I ought to just take my money and go to another church." Well, help yourself. God can take care of His people. When you give, you give to the Lord.

A person with the gift of giving has that purity of motive. It is wonderful. No strings attached at all. He is constantly giving as the Holy Spirit of God. Now listen, God not only gives the gift of giving, but God, I believe in my study, gives the gifts that are to be given. In other words, if you have the gift of giving but have nothing to give, I am wondering about this. You see, a lot of people have been very successful in life and they personally think that is their money.

I was reading the other day about one of the professional athletes. This guy is getting \$17 million to wear dirty football pants and to run around out on the field! A guy who has that money will think somehow he deserves that, if he is not careful. He will say, "Well, I will give a token to charity and help these people out. I will buy seats for them in the stands."

The Word of God says that one day he is going to stand before the Great Giver and he is going to answer for what he did with what the Great Giver chose to allow him to have on this earth. It may not be down here, folks. There is a reckoning day coming. You do know that, don't you? Why would God give you the ability to make it if He hadn't given you the gift to give it? "Well, Wayne, you are just pumping your own horn." No, I am teaching Romans 12, the gift of giving. It is something that God gives. It is not man orchestrated, it is God orchestrated. So the gift of giving never has strings. It has a purity of motive.

I want to give you an illustration how these gifts work together. To me, it is the best illustration we could possibly look at because it talks about having a party. Let's say you have a party. Seven people show up at that party. Each one of them is gifted differently, as we have looked at. We haven't looked at all the gifts, but let's say all the gifts are represented. Let's just say there is one uninvited guest and that is a baby that nobody could find a babysitter for. That little baby is sitting in a high chair at the same table these other seven are sitting at, having a wonderful time eating a big and wonderful meal. Right in the middle of the meal, in about 30 seconds, that little baby wrecks the whole evening. I mean, he knocks the plates off, breaks them, takes the spaghetti bowl and turns it upside down on his head. He has food in his hair, ears and all over them. There is a mess on the floor. The baby is throwing stuff and squalling and screaming.

Now watch. If every person at that table is controlled by the Holy Spirit of God, what is going to take place? The gift of serving jumps up. "Give me a broom, give me a mop. I will clean this mess up." The gift of mercy runs over to the baby. "Oh, bless its heart. Don't you all fuss at this little child. It is okay. It is going to be alright. Yes, yes. Let me clean your little cheeks." The gift of teaching: "Now let me clarify for you as to exactly why this happens. I have been studying you for a long time. If you look at how children act at tables, children have been sitting at tables for a long time. First of all, I think it is because they are children." They communicate. The gift of exhortation: "Let me give you five steps in how to help this child not do this again. Step number one, don't feed it. No. Step number two." Five steps, always giving practical advice. The gift of giving: "Oh, don't sweat it. Here is \$20, buy another plate." And you begin to go around. The gift of leading: "Okay, you do this, you do that, you do this and you do that." He stands up and just takes charge. The gift of prophecy, that is the mother: "Why did you do this? You know you did it!" Every mother has the gift of prophecy.

All of the gifts begin to function. What happens in the church when you put this into a relationship which God has gifted us to do in service? Listen, the greatest freedom we can all have is if you will set me free to be the person God has gifted me to be, and I will set you free to be the congregation God has gifted you to be. I will keep from putting you under guilt if you will keep from putting it on me. Let's just let Jesus be glorified in the midst of it. If you won't compare me to other preachers, I won't compare you to other congregations. "Does it work both ways?" Uh huh. We will just let the Holy Spirit of God do what He has designed to do. He will be the one who manifests the gift through you.

Jesus will get the glory, none of us. He is still alive, folks. He is on this earth. You say, "He is in heaven with the Father." Yes, but His Spirit is alive and well on this earth in the hearts and lives of believers. "Well, I don't see Him." Well, just start looking around. Start with yourself. Present your body, renew your mind, be willing and watch how God will manifest the character of the very Christ who saved you as He begins to produce through you a gift of serving or whatever it is. They will all be service. But a different gift. When you put them all together, what you are going to do is not see me or you, but you see Jesus who lives in us.

When I think of my son, I think of that tall lanky body. He is a man. I see God working in him in ways that challenge me. It convicts me as his father. When I think of Stephen, I think of his body. But you know what impresses me about that is that a body is only important because of the entity that lives in it. My Mama and my Daddy and my Grandparents are all in a grave in Virginia. I never go there. Why? They are not there. Their bodies are there. But the body doesn't mean anything if there is no life in it.

Christ has a body, doesn't He, on this earth? What is important about it? The body? No. The entity that lives in it. When you look at the church, you ought to see Him. You won't see it the same in every church because everybody is gifted differently, motivated many times the same way, but so diverse in the way they will express their gifts.

You know, I think this is just so appropriate, at the very hour that we are in as a church, to come back to basics, folks. What did you think the church was? It is the body of Christ. Not an organization, not man-made. It can't be controlled by man and never was. You don't push it and you don't pull it. It is Christ living in the hearts and lives of believers by grace, manifesting His character through specific gifts in diverse people