

Romans

Romans Chapter Twelve

Romans 12:3-8

June 12, 2011

This is lesson number 92 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God is revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: The Exercise of Gifts in the Church

Paul is writing to Christians in Rome and because “every part of Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness...” [2 Timothy 3:16] by extension this letter is written to all disciples of Jesus Christ.

What we have here in Romans Chapter 12 is as much for Christians in 2011 as it was for the Christians in Rome in AD 57.

Because God has redeemed us through the blood of Jesus Christ according to His purpose which was in Christ before the foundation of the world; because God Himself chose to be merciful to guilty sinners like me and you God has every right to expect us to present our bodies to Him in worship.

There is more to this matter of presenting our bodies in worship than just showing up at a church service. A person may attend every service that a church offers and still not be worshipping God.

If we really want to worship God in a way that is acceptable to God it is absolutely necessary that we know what God expects of us.

What is the will of God regarding worship?

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Last Sunday we introduced Chapter 12 and considered verses 1-2.

Romans 12:1-2

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. 2 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.

This morning we will examine the will of God for the conduct of believers as they exercise their gifts in the local church {verses 3-8}.

Romans 12:3-8

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. 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. 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; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

There is perfect unity in the Triune Godhead. Whatever Jesus Christ, the Son of God does is what the Father does and is what the Holy Spirit does.

Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it {Ephesians 5:25}.

In John 17, Jesus prays to the Father and declares that God the Father has loved the church as He loved the Son {John 17:23}

There is nothing more precious to God the Father than His own Son and the Son loved the church. Cf. John 3:35

There is nothing that will follow the church after the end of this present age.

You know of course the difference between the true church that Jesus prayed for and the visible church. The true church consists of all believers in Christ over the entire span of human history until the end of the present age.

The visible church is any and all manifestations of people who profess faith in Jesus Christ. Vineland Park Baptist Church is a visible or local church.

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Jesus told us that within the visible body that there are many who profess to believe in Him but who are on the broad road that leads to destruction.

Jesus said that there are tares growing along with the wheat and that we will not know who are the tares and wheat until the end of the present age. Jesus is talking about unbelievers and believers within the visible church.

The tare is the darnel weed that looks like wheat but it has no fruit in its grain head.

The **organization** of the local church is fairly simple. Over the centuries men with their traditions have added unscriptural offices and bodies of men and churches who supposedly have authority over the local church but that is not to be found anywhere in the Scripture.

We studied the organization of the local church over ten years ago and this local church unanimously agreed to change from the now traditional Pastor-Deacon leadership model to the Biblical Eldership leadership model.

One NT passage is clear enough to instruct us on the scriptural model for the local church.

Philippians 1:1

**Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi,
with the bishops and deacons:**

Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ,
Paul is an apostle and Timothy is an evangelist.
There is apostolic authority, which is the written Word of God.

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi,
This is the local church in Philippi.

With the bishops and deacons:
The church is **WITH** the **bishops** [elders, pastors] and **deacons**.
Just members of the same body with different gifts of the Spirit.

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The Word of God is the authority with Christ as the Head.
All the saints are a local body of believers.
Bishops [elders, pastors] and deacons are the only two offices in the church.

The elders have equality although there is a division of responsibility.

After the apostles passed away there is nowhere in the NT where you find any sort of hierarchy of men or groups of men such as cardinals and popes and presbyteries of churches with authority over the local church.

The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 was a one-time meeting to settle the matter of circumcision for the entire church.

So when we talk about the exercise of gifts in local church this is what we mean by the local church. A group of believers gathered in one place.

Sisters and brothers we have a clear Word from God on how we are to relate to each other in the church. We will sometimes fail in our efforts. And that is where love comes in and love covers a multitude of sins.

That is how Peter brought in Proverbs 10:12.

1 Peter 4:7-11

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. 8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." 9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 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.

You see there is always agreement between the apostles as they wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What Peter writes is in complete harmony with the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and James.

What is the will of God concerning the church and the exercise of gifts?

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There are two great principles given to us. **The first is principle is humility.**

The second principle is that **we are all part of one body.**

Paul has given us the doctrines of grace in Romans 1-11 which when correctly understood will destroy all human pride in the matter of justification.

But grace continues in the life of the Christian and everything that the believer has is a gift from God.

Among the sins of the church at Corinth was **pride** in their spiritual gifts.

Never lose sight of the fact that even though the church in Corinth had many problems they were still a group of saints who simply needed to be taught the Word of God.

The saints will submit to correction and the hypocrites will reject instruction.

First Corinthians 12-14 is a commentary on spiritual gifts and on how to guard against the abuse of any spiritual gift.

The **key** to spiritual gifts is 1 Corinthians 12:7:

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.”

The first is principle is humility.

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.

If a man is proud of a spiritual gift he is denying the grace of God, which gave the gift to him.

According to Peter all believers will have at least one spiritual gift. And the church will agree on the authenticity of a person's spiritual gift or gifts.

It is not up to me to decide that I have the gift of teaching or preaching and then announce to the church that I am going to be one of the preachers. What should happen is that a man may have reason to believe that God has given him that gift.

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Opportunities will arise so that the man may teach or preach. Over time the church recognizes that the man has the gift of teaching.

But if the church doesn't recognize that he has a gift the man should not insist on the exercise of the gift. And he shouldn't feel hurt if the church does not recognize the gift.

In other words he is **not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.**

So we should try to discern our gifts and humbly submit to the church. If a man tries to preach and it is apparent to the church that he does not have the gift of teaching the man is not a failure he should continue to search for the gift(s) that he does have.

The point of this **first principle** is to be humble and submit to the church because that is the will of God.

The second principle is that we are all part of one body.

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 metaphor of the human body is the perfect illustration of the church.

Paul uses the metaphor of the body human and how it works together. Again the commentary on verses 4-5 is First Corinthians 12.

The human body has a head, which is the control center of everything that the body does.

Wiggle your toes. How did you manage to do that? You thought of the action and if you chose to do it, your brain sent instructions down a nerve through the spinal cord that finally caused you to contract some muscles and your toes moved.

But it takes a hundred times longer to describe the action than it does to actually do it. Could your toe move independently of the muscles and nerves? They must work together and agree on what they will do.

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To expand the example, if your toe or other body parts move involuntarily the body is sick. A member of the body who acts independently will make the church sick.

The human body is nourished by the flow of blood that supplies oxygen and cleanses impurities. From arteries and veins to capillaries the blood moves throughout the body: One blood system for the entire body.

The church is the body of Christ. And the head of the church is Christ and the Holy Spirit moves in the body and supplies every need that the church has and cleanses sin from the body of Christ.

Read First Corinthians 12 this afternoon and be reminded of how the church must work together in order to be healthy and to be in the will of God.

The point is that no member is more important or more necessary to the body than any other member. Especially the pastor (s)!

Let me make another point about gifts. When God calls a person to the mission field it is a special call and may God bless everyone who serves in the role of a missionary.

But everyone cannot be a missionary. So do not think of yourself as being in some lower status in the church if you are not called to the mission field. Seek your gifts and worship God by presenting your bodies as a living sacrifice.

The gifts are different but they are all gifts of grace. Don't ever think of yourself as "only a doorkeeper". You are the "face" of the church to first time visitors. You are very important to the church. Find your gift and worship God by exercising your gift for the benefit of the body.

Don't be **proud** of your gift but **don't refuse** to serve the church with your gift. Your gift is needed and necessary for the health of the body.

After giving us **two principles** regarding the correct exercise of spiritual gifts, Paul writes in verses 6-8 about the attitude we should have as we worship together in the church.

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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; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Just a few words on each of the gifts mentioned here. These are not all of the gifts of the Spirit but these gifts are especially helpful to the church.

All spiritual gifts are for the profit of all in the church and not for private gratification, which leads to pride.

Prophecy can have several meanings. Many times prophecy refers to the declaration of a future event. E.g., God told Noah that He would flood the earth and He does. God told Abraham that He would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and He did. The OT prophets said Messiah would come and He came. Jesus said He will return and He will.

But there is another meaning for prophecy that I believe is intended here.

The Art of Prophecy, by William Perkins.

[A must read for preachers]

Four hundred years ago preaching was called prophesying.

When in the act of preaching a preacher or teacher is given insight beyond what he had prepared to say it is a form of prophecy. E.g., those of us who preach prepare our sermons and we should be diligent and try very hard to explain the Word of God by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

But often as we preach the Holy Spirit gives us a word that we had not planned on. Now this prophecy will **always be consistent** with the written Word of God. If the prophecy contradicts the written Word it is not of the Holy Spirit.

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Ministering here is the word used for deacons. Deacons are called by the church to serve certain functions.

But the context of this passage is the will of God for the exercise of spiritual gifts in the church. So I believe this is **any kind of ministering**. E.g., ministering is when you bring a meal to someone who has been in the hospital. Ministering is when you visit someone in the hospital. You can think of many ways to minister, give someone a ride to work, etc.

Brother David is ministering as he puts Brother Gables' sermons on discs.

Teaching is a gift. If God has given you the gift of teaching, then teach.

Prophesying vs. teaching? Not all teaching is prophesying.

We have other clear passages in the Scripture that puts limits on who may teach whom. It is not my purpose to go into all of that. But if the church recognizes that you have the gift of teaching, then teach.

Exhortation means to comfort and encourage.

To be able to comfort and encourage others is a gift. We all need encouragement. This is not flattery, which is insincere. This is rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep.

Helpful exhortation comes from the motivation to want the other person to excel in the exercise of his or her own gifts.

Giving is to be done liberally, i.e., freely and bountifully and never grudgingly with the idea that the person in need doesn't deserve to be helped.

Leading means all kinds of administration. It certainly means the oversight of the bishops [elders] but it includes the idea of carrying out any task for the good of the church. Do it diligently because ultimately you are serving Christ as you serve His body, the church.

Be **merciful** with cheerfulness. James tells us that God does not reproach. That is, God does not nag us and remind us of how often we fail Him. So we too can be merciful knowing that none of us deserve the mercy of God.

The will of God for the exercise of spiritual gifts in the church is for us to find what gifts we have and do them for the good of the body.

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In the matter of worship it is not so much what the church can do for me, as it is what I can do for the church.

So we have two principles as regarding our exercise of gifts in the church.

1) Humility and 2), we are all members of one body.

I will close with a poem that came to me in an email.

Easy? By Newman Hall

"He who overcomes will inherit all this, and
I will be his God and he will be my son." Rev. 21:7

To be a true Christian is not so easy a thing
as some suppose. It is not merely . . .
true beliefs,
an evangelical creed,
a scriptural church,
a comfortable sermon once or twice a week.

It is not this which constitutes Christianity.

You who think religion so very easy a thing,
be apprehensive lest, when too late, you find
that you knew not what true religion meant.

Easy? A depraved being to trample upon his
lusts? a proud being to lie prostrate with
humility and self reproach? those who are
"slow of heart, to believe," to receive the
Gospel as little children?

Easy? To "crucify the flesh," "to deny ungodliness,"
"to cut off a right hand, and to pluck out a right eye?"

Easy? To be in the world, and yet not of the world;
to come out from it, not by the seclusion of the
cloister, but by holiness of life; to be diligent in
its duties, yet not absorbed by them; appreciating
its innocent delights, and yet not ensnared by them;
beholding its attractions, and yet rising superior to them?

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Easy? To live surrounded by objects which appeal to the sight, and yet to endure as seeing what is invisible?

Easy? To pray and see no answer to prayer, and still pray on; to fight this battle, and find fresh foes ever rising up, yet still to fight on; to be harassed with doubts and fears, and yet walk on in darkness, though we see no light, staying ourselves upon God?

Easy? To be preparing for a world we have never visited, in opposition to so much that is captivating in a world where we have always dwelt, whose beauties we have seen, whose music we have heard, whose pleasures we have experienced?

Easy? To resist that subtle foe who has cast down so many of the wise and the mighty?

Easy? When Jesus says it is a "strait gate," and that if we would enter we must "strive," bidding us "take up our cross daily, deny ourselves, and follow Him?"

Ah! it is no soft flowery meadow, along which we may languidly stroll; but a rough, craggy cliff that we must climb.

It is no smooth, placid stream, along which we may dreamily float, but a tempestuous ocean we must stem.

It is no easy lolling in a cushioned chariot, that bears us on without fatigue and peril. If we are to be saved, we must "overcome."

"He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son." Rev. 21:7

God willing next time we will study the will of God for us as individuals both in the church and in the world.