

**Message #42****Romans 12:3-8**

We saw last time that God wants us to discover the perfect will of God for our lives (Rom. 12:2). So a logical question is what is God's perfect will for my life? Is God's perfect will that we sell everything we own and go to some foreign country as a missionary? Is God's perfect will that we all pack up and head off to some Bible College? Is God's perfect will that we move away and go someplace different? What is God's perfect will for our life once we have experienced the saving grace of God?

You do have to wonder if those kinds of things are God's perfect will, why Paul didn't say that to all the churches to whom he ministered. You do have to wonder why Jesus Christ did not say that to the seven churches in Revelation.

Unfortunately, there are those who would tell you that this is God's perfect will for your life. Years ago, we had a missionary come to a chapel service and in his zeal he said that everyone should think about becoming a foreign missionary. Now I appreciate his passion, but why didn't Paul say that? Why didn't Jesus Christ say that to the churches?

Now there is no question that God does want to use every believer. In fact, as we saw last time, we are to become a transformed believer by the renewing of our minds on the word of God. So just exactly what is it that is God's perfect will for our life?

Carefully notice how **verse 3** begins, "for." Paul says let me give a further explanation as to what God's perfect will actually is:

**GOD'S PERFECT WILL FOR OUR LIFE IS THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE, DEVELOP AND UTILIZE OUR UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL GIFT FOR THE GLORY OF GOD AND FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD.**

Dr. John Walvoord said, "There is divine purpose in the life of every Christian and spiritual gifts are keeping with that purpose."

Last time we saw the kind of life we are to have if we are going to discover this perfect will:

- 1) We need to be continually living a sacrificial life that is holy, acceptable and pleasing.
- 2) We need to not be continually conformed to this world.
- 3) We need to be continually transformed by renewing our minds.

When we use the term "spiritual gift," we are referring to a special grace gift that God gives to a believer that enables that believer to minister at a very unusual level, to make a vital contribution to the body of Jesus Christ.

A spiritual gift is a supernatural enablement that is different from natural talents and abilities. God's will for every believer is that they develop to the point where they are discovering their gift and are using it for His glory.

Before Paul launches into this discussion, he qualifies himself by saying, “I am saying this to all of you” because of the specific grace that has been given to me. Paul says God is the one who has put me in this position to instruct you concerning the perfect will of God for your life.

Now to discover God’s perfect will for your life, as near as I may grammatically determine, begins with how we think in our minds. In fact, we may notice that **three times in verse 3**, the word “think” is used.

This particular word (*froneo*) has to do with thinking and understanding something. This has to do with having a sensible mind that is practical and logical and understands (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 473-474).

There are two specific ways Paul says one will think if they are going to discover God’s perfect will for their lives:

**THINKING WAY #1** – One will not think more highly of himself than he should. **12:3a**

This is a big problem in religion and in spirituality—people think more highly of themselves than they should and they want you to think highly of them too. This must have been a real threat to Rome because Paul keeps bringing this up—9:20; 11:18, 25. People can become so arrogant that instead of seeing themselves as a wretched person (7:24), they see themselves as so high and mighty that they can even question God (9:20).

Paul says to discover God’s will, you need to think honestly, accurately, truthfully and with an understanding mind about yourself and your gifts and abilities. God does not want someone to think irrationally, emotionally, nonsensibly about themselves.

Many years ago, in a church we were in, there was a woman who wanted to stand up and sing solos before the congregation. She did not have the skills to do it. So when she would sing, most in the congregation were saying when will this misery end. She was proud of the fact she got to get up before people and stand there and sing. It did not enhance worship, it brought it down. That is not God’s will. It is not God’s will for someone to think more highly of themselves than they should.

There is a pride in people and they tend to think more highly of themselves than they ought. No one will achieve God’s perfect will for their lives thinking like that. So when it comes to our spiritual gift, we don’t want to elevate ourselves above what is realistically accurate.

God wants very careful thought given to this. God determines what gift every believer receives—Romans 12:3; I Corinthians 12:18; I Peter 4:10-11. God determines our spiritual gift, we don’t. We have no say in this matter. God determines who gets what gift and it is not determined by our ways or our works.

There are some people who think more highly of themselves than they should. Years ago, when I was in DeMotte, Indiana, a man, who wanted support for going on the mission field, stopped by my office. I asked him a series of questions. One was what mission agency are you with and he said CAM missions. Another was what did he see his spiritual gift to be and how did he determine it. That seemed to set him back in his chair. He said I have a desire that people believe in the Lord. I said we all have that desire, but that doesn't mean we should all go to some foreign country. So what's your spiritual gift and how did you determine it? Well he launched into a discussion of CAM Missions and I said that is a great mission founded by C. I. Scofield. He said if Scofield were alive today, we would not let him in our mission because we have disagreement. I politely said get out of my office. You will not get one dime from this church. What Arrogance. Thinking more highly of himself than he should. That guy will never accomplish the perfect will of God in this country or any other country.

**THINKING WAY #2** – One will think realistically and soundly about himself and spiritual gifts. **12:3b**

**Sound Thinking #1** - God is the one who gives each believer a faith gift. **12:3b**

**Sound Thinking #2** - God's family has many members but they do not have the same gifts. **12:4**

**Sound Thinking #3** - God's many family members are one body in Christ. **12:5a**

**Sound Thinking #4** - God's family members are individuals connected to each other. **12:5b**

**Sound Thinking #5** - God has given individuals differing grace gifts. **12:6a**

**Sound Thinking #6** - God's individuals are to develop their own spiritual gift. **12:6b-8**

In this list of spiritual gifts, Paul lists seven:

**(Gift #1)** - The gift of prophecy. **12:6b**

Paul had the gift of Apostle (Rom. 11:13). Notice the only revelatory gift Paul mentions is "prophecy". Romans was written 3 years after I Corinthians. By then, the sign gifts were gone. When Peter wrote I Peter 5 years after Romans, he said there were speaking gifts and saving gifts.

The gift of prophecy was a revelatory gift that received direct messages from God. This gift revealed God's truth and God's future. **It may be classified as a temporal gift because Paul said in I Corinthians 13:8-10 that this gift of prophecy would be done away. He, himself, classified this as a temporal gift.**

In the early days of the church, when there were no written Bibles, this gift was critical to revealing truth. As a spiritual gift, it seems to have shut down around AD 60. About 35 years later God revealed the ultimate prophetic book, Revelation in AD 95 and that completed the Scriptures.

**(Gift #2) - The gift of service. 12:7a**

The word “service” is one from which we get our English word “deacon.” This gift serves God in the context of the church. One with this gift likes to serve in a variety of ways and opportunities. One with the gift of service does not need to be begged to serve God. There are many ways God may be served in the church—helping, cleaning, setting up and taking down, taking meals, decorating, visiting, working in the nursery, helping with security, helping with sound. One with this gift loves to serve in some capacity. They have a gift from God that excels at this.

**(Gift #3) - The gift of teaching. 12:7b**

To be a true teacher, you set your opinions aside and go after understanding and teaching truth. God does give some a supernatural ability to teach His word. In a general sense we all are to share truth. Hebrews 5:11 makes that point clear. But in a specific sense this is a gift that functions far greater than that. **It seems to me that one who is truly gifted to teach has a supernatural gift to study.** The two go hand in hand. It is possible that this is a single gift, but it is often in the context of pastor/teacher (Eph. 4:11).

One reason why there is a close proximity between pastor and teacher is because one who is spending a great deal of time studying and understanding God’s word should be able to shepherd and lead God’s people into paths of righteousness.

Now in the course of my years, I have known many with this gift and I have also known those who thought they had it but didn’t have it. In fact, James gives a warning that is specifically aimed at thinking one does have this gift. There will be a greater level of accountability (James 3:1).

**(Gift #4) - The gift of exhortation. 12:8a**

The gift of exhortation is a gift that enables a person to come alongside someone to comfort and console them in a way that will encourage, comfort and admonish.

This is a much needed gift in today’s negative world. This is a supernatural ability to encourage people. There are those who are very gifted to make a positive comment or action that lifts others up.

Quite frankly, there are many who discourage people, and this gift is most definitely needed.

**(Gift #5) - The gift of giving. 12:8b**

This is a very rare Pauline word. It is only used five times in the N.T. and four of those times it is used by Paul and one time by his close associate Luke (Rom. 1:11; 12:8; Eph. 4:28; I Thess. 2:8; Luke 3:11).

The gift of giving is a special supernatural gift that God gives to a person. He prospers that person so that he might give to the work of God and to the needs of others (Luke 3:11).

A person with this gift is vital to the church. Now we want to point out Paul's editorial comment about this gift. **He does not comment on the act of giving, but on the attitude of giving.** The attitude for one with this gift is an attitude of liberality.

In other words, one with this gift utilizes it with a generous and unselfish spirit with no thought of self-gain.

Now the gift of giving is a supernatural gift of God so one with this gift should certainly use it liberally. Now we are all to be giving to the work of God as the Lord has prospered us. Donald Grey Barnhouse said every believer is to give to God and if you don't, He will take it by some other means.

But one with the gift of giving can function at a much greater level than the average believer. That is how the gift works.

**(Gift #6) - The gift of leading. 12:8c**

In some churches men fight for power. People want dominant limelight authority. There are arrogant, dominant, power hungry tyrants in most churches who would rather lord it over the people rather than lead the people.

But God gives a gift of leading to a person that enables them to lead, direct, rule and govern in a right way. **Certainly one with this gift will be able to first lead himself or herself in the right, true ways of God. If you can't lead yourself, you can't lead others and don't have the gift.**

This is a supernatural gift and it is to be used with diligence. It is to be used very carefully and not hastily. One with this gift prays, analyzes, meditates and thinks before he acts. He carefully thinks through Scriptures to determine the proper way to lead.

He is not given to the emotional or sensational, but to careful and prayerful thought.

**(Gift #7) - The gift of mercy. 12:8b**

This is a supernatural gift that enables one to show compassion to others especially when they are in hurting and helpless moments. This person has a heart to relate to those hurting and he utilizes this gift "with cheerfulness."

Paul says the will of God for your life is that you transform your mind on the word of God and go to work on discovering what God has really given you the skills and ability to do.

**Eight Steps to discover your own gift and God's perfect will for your life:**

1. It starts by making sure we have faith in Jesus Christ by His grace and mercy. Rom. 12:1a
2. Meet the prerequisites of Romans 12:1b-2
  - A. Flesh body not involved in corrupt things, but holy things.
  - B. Not being conformed to this world.
  - C. Process of being transformed by word of God.
3. Stay focused on renewing your mind on the Scriptures and applying them to your life.
4. Pray and ask God to allow you to discover your gift.
5. Take advantage of opportunities and doors God opens.
6. Honestly assess yourself to see if this is something you are able to do and enjoy doing.
7. Ask spiritually minded truthful people to evaluate you concerning a gift.
8. Assess whether or not your use of a gift influences others in a God honoring way.

A gift is faith operative. You will not get a letter or diploma from heaven saying you have this gift. But if you by faith follow these guidelines, God will let you discover yours and will use you at the maximum level.