

(Romans) Romans 12:1-8

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of presenting our bodies and renewing our minds as acts of true spiritual worship in Romans 12:1-8.

Duration: 46:43

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:1-3, Romans 12:9-21, Hebrews 8:11

Topics: "Humility", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of a lack of fellowship in churches. He emphasizes that the problem is not a lack of activity or programs, but rather a higher estimation of oneself than is accurate. The speaker encourages believers to have a sober estimate of themselves. The sermon also highlights God's sovereignty in delivering Israel from Egypt and choosing Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as His faithfulness in restoring those who turn back to Him. The ultimate result of presenting ourselves to God is that we begin to understand His perfect will and live fruitful lives.

Transcript

Let's turn today to Romans chapter 12 and verse 1. In our last few studies we've been looking at Romans 9, 10 and 11, which I said at the beginning was like a portion of Romans which is in parentheses or within brackets, where he deals with Israel and God's dealings with Israel, and in using the example of Israel and God's dealings with them, Paul brings out three very, very important truths that have great relevance for us who are saved. First, the truth of God's sovereignty, His sovereign choice. Secondly, the truth of God's righteousness and His way of making people righteous.

And thirdly, God's faithfulness in that He never forsakes His people. These are three very important truths for us to understand, and he emphasizes it by using the example of God's dealings with Israel, His sovereignty in the way He delivered Israel from Egypt, and His choice of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and His way of righteousness, which is not by works, and His faithfulness in restoring those who were once cast out because of unbelief, because they now come to faith. There is always hope for those who turn back.

No matter how far you've fallen away from God, how long you've been away from God, you can turn back to God even today. As long as you're alive, there is hope. Hope is lost only when you die, my friend, never before that.

It doesn't matter how low you've sunk or how long you've been away from God, you can come back to God today. Today you can come back to Him. Take the opportunity.

God's mercy is so great. His grace is so great. His wisdom is so great.

And such fantastic things He has done for us. And in view of all these mercies, it says in chapter 12, verse 1, what should we do? What does God want from us primarily? A lot of preachers give you the impression that what God wants from you primarily is your money. This is a total falsehood.

That's not what the New Testament asks us to give. It's true that in the Old Testament, God told the Israelites to give ten percent of their income to Him. That was a commandment under the law.

And the purpose of that commandment was, we read in the book of Deuteronomy, to teach people to put God first in their lives. That was the whole purpose. Because men love money so much, God said, as soon as you bring in your crops, in those days they didn't earn a salary, their income was from their fields, as soon as you bring in your crops, He said, set apart ten percent and give it to Me.

To teach them to be grateful to God for the bountiful crops. And to teach them not to be selfish or covetous, but to share what they had with others who were in need. That ten percent went to the support of the Levites, the priests.

So, that was how it was there in the Old Testament. But here, in the New Testament, it says concerning money, God loves a cheerful giver. And in any case, that's not what He wants primarily.

It's fine if a person gives money for God's work, but that's not what God is after primarily. Do you know what He wants, first of all? He wants your body. That's what it says in Romans 12, verse 1. In view of all of God's mercies, if you think of all that God has done for you, and we have many, many people in the world who say, well, God has done so many wonderful things for me.

Well, praise the Lord for that, if God's done so many wonderful things for you. What are you going to do in response to God for all that He's done? It says here, present your body. If you don't present your body, whatever else you may do has no value.

See, the Christian life, to be a born-again Christian is like being married to Jesus Christ. What would you think of a wife who works and earns and gives her money to her husband, cooks food for her husband, but gives her body to somebody else? Would that be a faithful wife? Far better have a wife who gives her body to her husband even if she can't cook too well, or even if she doesn't work and earn any money. You know that.

It's exactly the same with God. Do you think God wants your money? Do you think God wants your service first? No. He wants your body.

He wants yourself. He wants your love, your affection, your devotion to Him. He wants every part of your body exclusively for Himself.

It's just like a marriage. And it's a picture of this that we find in the Old Testament, in the book of Leviticus, chapter 1, where the offerer had to give a burnt offering to God. He could take an ox or a sheep or something, and he had to cut it into pieces and put it on the altar.

You couldn't take a whole bullock and put it on the altar. No. You had to take that bullock and cut it into small pieces and then offer it to God.

That was a burnt offering. Now that was different from the sin offering which is mentioned later in Leviticus 5 and Leviticus 6. Leviticus chapter 1 is a burnt offering, totally given to God. Every part of it was to be given to God.

And it's a picture of what we read here in Romans 12, verse 1. Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Now it's very interesting that this presentation of our body to God is called spiritual worship. A lot of people think that worship is praising God on Sunday morning.

They call it a worship service. In some churches, a worship service does not even include any time of praise. It's just some prayers and a sermon.

But even those churches which have a time of praise and thanksgiving mistake it for worship. What they are actually doing on Sunday morning, such churches, are praising God. That's good.

Giving thanks to God. Thanksgiving. That's good.

But praise and thanksgiving are not the same as worship. Worship goes beyond praise and beyond thanksgiving. We usually start with thanksgiving for what God has done for us, His material blessings, usually that God has given us.

We move on one step higher to praise for God's wonderful power and sovereignty and love and goodness and all that. And then ultimately we move into worship. Adoring God for who He is.

We've got nothing to do with ourselves. And we present our bodies to God just like that Old Testament burnt offering. Cut piece by piece means what? It means I don't say to God, Lord, here is my body.

It's very easy to say that and deceive ourselves. Let's go piece by piece. Lord, here are my eyes.

I give them to You. I have used these eyes many times in the past to please myself, to sin, to look at things I shouldn't have looked at, to read things I shouldn't have read. These eyes have been offered to the devil for sinning, for lusting.

But now I offer them to You. From today onwards, I want my eyes to be used for the glory of God, to read scripture, to look at things that are pleasant and pleasing to God and to be turned away from things that are dishonoring to God. And Lord, here are my ears.

In the past, I have listened to a lot of gossip and backbiting and criticism of others and all types of evil things and dirty jokes and all that. I have listened and my ears have served the devil. But now I present them to You.

My ears are Yours. I want to listen to Your voice. I want to listen to the word of God.

I want to listen to the things that will glorify You. Lord, here are my feet. My feet have taken me to a lot of places in the past which I wouldn't want to go to today which would dishonor Jesus Christ.

I present my feet to You, my legs. Please take them, use them to take me to places where I can be a blessing to other people. I offer my legs to You.

Lord, here are my hands. My hands have been used in the past to commit all types of sins. But I don't want to do those sins anymore.

These hands don't belong to the devil anymore. I present my hands to You. I have written letters with these hands that have hurt people.

I want to now write letters that bless people. I want to do things that will glorify You with my hands. And Lord, here are my bodily passions, desire for food, desire for sex, desire for sleep.

I offer them to You, these bodily desires. Let them never get out of control. Let me keep them all under control to be used for the glory of God.

Let me not sleep to the extent of being lazy and self-indulgent. Let me not eat to the extent of becoming a glutton. And let me never indulge in sex outside of marriage.

Lord, here are my desires. I give my body and its passions to You. And Lord, here is my tongue.

My tongue has committed so many sins, hurt so many people, lost its temper, and spoken rudely and angrily to so many. But now, Lord, I give it to You. I want my tongue to be used for Your glory, for You to speak through me, to bless other people, to give the Word of God.

It's been used for singing worldly songs in the past. But now, Lord, it's going to sing for Your glory alone. Do you understand the difference between presenting your body and presenting it part by part? It's only when you present it part by part that you really know whether you mean what you say.

So many of you may have said, Lord, here is my body. I give it all to You. And maybe it's only today as you hear this message that you discover that you never gave anything.

That's why the Lord said in the Old Testament, cut that burnt offering into pieces and offer it piece by piece to Me. And that, we read in Romans 12, 1, is the way you worship God. Do you want to be a spiritual worshiper? Here is where you must begin.

Present your body as a living sacrifice to God. Say, Lord, here is my body. I give it to You.

I want my body to glorify You. Every part. Go piece by piece, like I said, in any other part of your body or your bodily desires or passions that you can think of.

Offer it as a sacrifice just like they took the bullet, cut it piece by piece and placed it on the altar and took their hands off. The fire of God fell upon that offering at times. And the same thing can happen to you as you present all your ambitions, plans, desires and everything you want to do with your body and say, Lord, I want my body to be used for Your glory.

Again, the fire of God's Holy Spirit can come and fill your life and make you an effective servant for His glory. Let's turn today to Romans chapter 12. We were looking at verse 1 in our last study that the least that you can do in view of God's tremendous mercy and grace to your life is to present your body, every part of your body from head to foot to God.

Just like in the Old Testament God demanded a tithe from Israel. Today, the New Testament equivalent of that is something more difficult than tithing. It's to give our body to God.

And you can ask yourself that question. Some of you who are earning a lot of money may find it very difficult to give 10% of your income to God. You say, that's difficult because that's a lot of money.

But let me ask you another question. Is it easier to give 10% of one month's income to God or is it easier to not lust with your eyes for all 31 days of that month? You know the answer. It's easier to pay our tithe.

Far easier. A thousand times easier. Is it easier to pay your tithe or is it easier to keep your tongue under control so that you don't lose your temper any time for 31 days in a month? You know it's easier.

Man chooses the easier way. He tries to bribe God by giving him money. You can't do it.

Politicians perhaps could be bribed and businessmen perhaps and government officials but not God. You can't bribe God by giving Him money. You can't compensate for your sin and disobedience by serving God or giving out tracts or giving money to His work.

God wants your body. He wants your eyes. He wants your hands.

He wants your legs. He wants your feet. He wants your ears.

He wants your tongue. He wants every part of that body which He created so that Christ can be manifested through your body. So that purity and love and humility and goodness will be manifested through your body.

This is the whole purpose of being filled with the Holy Spirit. So many people want to be filled with the Holy Spirit who have never given their bodies to God. Why do you want the Holy Spirit to come and fill your life? Isn't it to make your eyes purer and your tongue purer and your heart purer and every part of your body purer? It's the Holy Spirit who wants to fill your body.

The Bible says the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Father is in heaven. He doesn't want your body.

Jesus Christ has already got a body, the Son of God. It's the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit who wants to come and fill your body. Make it His temple.

And when you do that, it says here you can offer spiritual worship to God, Romans 12.1. This is true worship. More than thanksgiving, more than praise, worship. Adoring, acknowledging that God is God.

Not just in words, but in a body laid at the feet of Jesus. What does it mean when it says that people fell down, like John fell down like a dead man before the Lord. It's a picture of total surrender.

Here is my body, Lord. It's all yours. That's how they worshiped and that's how we are to worship today.

Don't be conformed to this world, verse 2, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Once we have given our bodies to God, the next thing we need to give is our mind. Man is body, soul and spirit.

And the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our spirit. And from the spirit, He wants to control both our soul and our body. He wants to control our mind and our body.

And both of these are mentioned here in verses 1 and 2. What does it mean to be worldly? Because it says here in verse 2, don't be conformed to this world. Now a lot of people, their understanding of worldliness is wearing fancy clothes, watching television, going to the movies, drinking, gambling. A person who does all this, you'd say is a worldly Christian.

And a person who gives up all this sometimes thinks he is not a worldly Christian. It's not that easy to give up worldliness because worldliness is not primarily in our dress or what we do on the outside. Worldliness is in our mind.

That's what we see very clearly from Romans 12, 2. Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So that teaches us that worldliness is in the mind. That's where you get conformed to the world first.

And that's where you get transformed also. Everything begins with the mind, with your thoughts. As a man thinks in his heart, we read in Proverbs 23, verse 2, so is he.

As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. The way a person thinks in his heart, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, those values we have in our mind determine what we become. For example, a man whose mind is set on making money, his whole life will follow after that.

A man who is set on glorifying God, his whole life will follow after that. It depends on what you value in your mind. So worldliness is not primarily seen in your dress or your habits.

It's in your mind. And it's because you have that in your mind that you dress in a particular way or wear certain ornaments or the amount of makeup you put and various other things are determined by what you think in your mind. It's not the outside.

Don't judge a person just because you see certain things on the outside. And don't judge the other person and imagine somebody is spiritual because externally they appear simple. This is one of the great deceptions you find in Christendom today.

Worldliness is in the mind. A man can wear very simple clothes on the outside and be a tremendous lover of money in his mind. He is thoroughly worldly.

And another person may dress a little more fancy perhaps but be very generous towards God. That person is more spiritual. One person may wear white clothes and be a gossip and a backbiter.

That person is thoroughly worldly. And another person may wear much more fancy clothes but have a meek and a quiet spirit that he doesn't commit such sins with his tongue. Such a person is more spiritual in God's eyes.

On earth, it's the person who is externally simple who gets the glory. Those are the Pharisees who try to be externally righteous. Worldliness, remember my friend, is in your mind.

If you don't get rid of it from your mind, any amount of external change in your dress and behavior is not going to make you unworldly or heavenly. It's very important that our mind learns to think the way God thinks. Because we can never be transformed into the likeness of Christ if God doesn't give us His sense of values.

God wants to give it to us. He wants our mind to be renewed. Or we need to see things from God's point of view.

Let's put it like this. When we were born, as we grew up, we were influenced by the nature, the sinful nature we had. And also by the way we were brought up at home to get certain values.

We were influenced by the newspapers and books we read and so many things to get certain values. And all those values, essentially, were probably worldly. And so, now that we are born again, God wants to change us into the likeness of Christ.

How are we going to be changed into the likeness of Christ? Is it wearing the same clothes He wore? Is it looking like Him? No. It's in having the same values that Jesus had. That means our mind has to be transformed.

The things which the world considers valuable, we don't consider valuable anymore. And things which Jesus considers valuable, we consider valuable. And things which Jesus considers unimportant, we consider unimportant.

This is what it means to be transformed. And when that happens inside us in our mind, then it will manifest itself in character. And in our behavior and our conduct will fall in line with our sense of values.

So that's what it's speaking of here about the renewing of our mind. We present our bodies first, verse 1, and then we allow the Holy Spirit to change our way of thinking. That means, to use an example, when we are standing beneath or by the side of a huge skyscraper, a huge multi-story building that looks so huge and we are like dwarfs in front of that building.

Many, many things look so big when we are on this earth. But the higher up we move, for example, if you get into an airplane and move up to 30,000 feet, and if you could see the ground, everything would be so small. Even from 5,000 feet, many things look so small.

Buildings look like little toy buildings. Cars look like little toy cars. And the higher you go, the smaller these things of earth become.

When people reach the moon, the whole world was just like a little ball in front of them. That which appeared so big when they were standing on the earth, now looked like a small little ball in the sky. The same thing happens spiritually.

When our mind is transformed, we begin to look at things from God's viewpoint, from heaven's viewpoint. It's like going up in a space rocket and looking at earth from heaven. Right now, we are on the earth and looking at things from the earth.

For example, trials, problems look so big to us and the way people irritate us and trouble us, they bother us a lot. But if we were to move up to God's viewpoint, how does God look at all this? How does God look at all the workings of Satan on the earth? He's not bothered because he knows how it's all going to end. And when we begin to look at things from God's viewpoint, we come to rest in ourselves.

We become free from anxiety. We become free from tension. We become free from complaining.

Our life becomes filled with joy. What is the secret? The secret is to allow the Holy Spirit to transform our way of thinking. And that's why it's important to meditate on God's Word in the Bible.

The Bible is the only book in the whole world that reveals God's mind. If you want to know what God thinks like, come to the scriptures. And you'll have to change your opinion about many things because God's way of thinking is very different from yours.

He doesn't explain everything of His ways to us, but He has revealed some of it in His Word. The portion that we need to know. And as we respond to that and accept it, we will find that gradually over a period of time, the Holy Spirit is able to change our way of thinking.

And we understand the will of God, it says in verse 2. The result of this, the ultimate result of presenting our body and our mind to God is that we begin to understand God's perfect will in different situations. We begin to understand that good and acceptable and perfect will of God in our lives. The plan that God's made for our lives.

And that's the way our lives can be fruitful so that we have no regrets in eternity. Let's turn now to Romans chapter 12 and verse 3. In our last two studies we were looking at some depth into verses 1 and 2 where it speaks about our presenting our body to God which is an act of spiritual worship and our allowing the Holy Spirit to renew our way of thinking as we meditate on Scripture so that we begin to think like God thinks about various things and people, etc. We begin to look at people the way God looks at them.

And thus, and only thus, can we find the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. We cannot know God's perfect will if we don't allow the Holy Spirit to renew our way of thinking. In the Old Testament when somebody wanted to know God's will they'd go to a prophet and the prophet would sometimes tell him to come back after two or three days and he'd ask God and God would reveal His will through the prophet.

But in the New Covenant it says in Hebrews chapter 8 that all shall know Me from the least to the greatest. The youngest baby, spiritual baby, newly born again and the mature saint can all know God's will. You don't have to go to a prophet.

You don't have to go to a pastor. You don't have to go to anyone. You can go directly to God and allow Him to reveal His will to you.

But how does He do it? It says here in Romans chapter 12 verse 2 that we prove what the will of God is. It's not by a voice from heaven that tells you what God wants you to do. No.

It's not by some supernatural revelation. It's by what looks like a very ordinary way. Allowing our mind to be reoriented to look at things and people from God's viewpoint.

And the more that happens the more we can prove. And the word prove indicates that there's a certain amount of trial and error here. We make mistakes.

But we learn through those mistakes. And we find this is so true to life. Any honest Christian will admit that in seeking to do the will of God in his life he made mistakes.

I know I made lots of them in my life. But we must learn from those mistakes. We finally learn how to understand God's will.

We prove the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Having said that he moves on from verse 3 onwards to the end of that chapter on a number of personal into a number of personal exhortations concerning the Christian life and also concerning our relationship with others in Christ's body and towards

our enemies. See, when our mind is reoriented to think like God thinks when our mind is renewed what will happen? One of the first things that will happen in our life is we will become humble.

Jesus was extremely humble. He was a very very humble person. And so the very first thing mentioned here in verse 3 is concerning humility.

It says here in verse 3 Through the grace given to me I say to every man among you. Notice the way Paul speaks. Paul could have said I've got authority.

I'm an apostle and let me tell you fellows something. But he doesn't speak like that. He says if I'm permitted to speak to you it's only because God has given me some grace and understanding of His ways.

It's not because I'm in any way better than you. You know, it's that type of person whom God uses to minister His word. Remember, Paul was around 60 years old at this time.

He'd probably been walking with God for 30 years. It's one thing to say this when you're newly converted. It's quite another thing to say the same thing 30 years after you're saved, after you've raised the dead, established churches, written scripture and still to be able to say Through the grace given to me I am what I am by the grace of God.

So see the humility with which Paul speaks here. He's not only telling you something because God's given me grace. And what am I telling you? He says Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.

This is a common problem among all believers. We are constantly tempted particularly to spiritual pride. If God blesses us in some way, if God uses us in some way perhaps to lead a soul to Christ, perhaps to fulfill a ministry, to do something, the very next moment we're tempted to begin to think highly about ourselves, to begin to elevate ourselves above other believers.

And once we do that, we've lost our contact with God. And that's exactly what the devil wants. The devil is in fellowship with everyone who's proud, whether he's a believer or an unbeliever.

And so Paul says, Be careful. See, God is the one who has allotted to each of us a certain measure of faith. That's what he says in verse 3. God decided not only what color your skin should be, not only your level of intelligence, not only your background.

He also has allotted to you a certain measure of faith. The righteous will live by faith. So, whatever faith I have is something God has allotted to me.

I cannot boast over another person who apparently has less faith than me, as though I'm better than him. Verse 3 is teaching us basically to humbly acknowledge that everything we have, both physically and spiritually, is from God. So he says, Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.

When Paul writes to the Corinthians, he writes similar words in 1 Corinthians 4, and says to them, What have you got which you did not receive? 1 Corinthians 4, 7. And if you received it, how can you boast as though you manufactured it yourself? If you are spiritual, did you make yourself spiritual? Then it's definitely a counterfeit spirituality. If God made you spiritual, how can you boast about it? That's the only genuine thing. Who gave you your intelligence, which made you more intelligent than somebody else? I hope you recognize it was God.

You see, we could apply that to every area of life. And we discover that there's not a thing we have in our life, physically, intellectually, emotionally, financially, spiritually, you name it. In every area, everything we have is God's gift.

And once you recognize that, you'll have a better attitude towards other believers and towards other human beings. You'll be a far better Christian because you will not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. And you'll also recognize that what God did for you, He can do for that other person too.

And that'll give you hope even for sinners. So, it's very good for us to have a sober judgment of ourselves, to have an honest estimate of ourselves. You know, when we look at our work and our life and see what God has been able to accomplish, and we find, perhaps, it's so little.

Don't go around judging other servants of God who may have accomplished far more for God than you have. You know, this is a bad tendency among a lot of believers to criticize other preachers, to criticize full-time workers who've sacrificed their jobs and gone out somewhere just because they made some mistake. I would say, have a sober estimate of yourself.

And you won't be so quick to criticize others. Have you brought as many souls to the Lord as that brother has brought? If not, have a sober estimate of yourself. And don't be so quick to judge him or condemn him.

And you'll find God gives grace to the humble. The more you humble yourself, the more you receive grace from God. Having said that, he goes on to the theme of believers becoming one body in Christ.

And it's very interesting that verse 3 is the introduction to the whole subject. What is the biggest problem in churches? It's a lack of fellowship. It's not lack of activity.

It's not lack of programs or plans or meetings or musical instruments. It's lack of fellowship. And with all the advances in science and technology that's being used in Christian churches today, it doesn't seem to have improved the quality of fellowship among believers.

People still fight and quarrel with one another. Husbands and wives do that at home. Believers do it in a church.

What is the reason? People have got a higher estimate of themselves than is actually the case. So verse 3, have a sober estimate of yourself. Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.

It's the introduction to this whole passage that follows on from verse 4 on our being members of one body in Christ. Verse 3 is, as it were, the foundation. We can say humility is the ground on which the fruits of the Spirit grow.

All the fruit of the Spirit can grow only on this ground. The church can be built only on this ground. And that's how he goes on to verse 4, where he says the church is like a body.

And just like in our human body, we have many members and they don't all have the same function. We know that very well. The hands do something and the eyes do something else and the ear does something else.

So, the point is, why in the world do you want other people in the church to have the same ministry as you have? He says, in the same way, we who are many, verse 5, are one body and individually members one

of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us each exercise them accordingly. We think that just because we've got a particular burden, everybody else should have the same burden.

For example, the Bible says that God has placed in the church those who are evangelists. Their primary burden will naturally be the salvation of the lost. Then God has placed teachers and their primary burden is to build up those who are already born again with teaching.

God has placed prophets whose primary burden is to challenge and expose sin in the midst of the church. God has placed people with the gift of healing whose primary burden is to bring healing to those who are sick. Now just think of these four ministries I just mentioned.

Evangelism, teaching, prophecy, and healing. Now if any one of these people think that everybody else should have my burden, it's like the hand saying that the eye should become a hand and the ear should become a hand and the foot should become a hand. Can you imagine the chaos that will be in the body if everything becomes a hand? But our human body members are more sensible.

They don't want everybody to be like them. They are content to be what God has made them and content to let other people be what God has made them. And so that's why in the church we need to recognize that God may have given some other burden to somebody else and you must allow him to be himself.

Don't try to make him like yourself. God wants only one person like you in the body of Christ. He doesn't want anymore.

He's made someone else different with a different ministry. If we recognize this, it can save us from such a lot of confusion and wrong attitudes towards other believers. The other thing we see here is that we are members of one another which means even though we have different ministries, we care for one another.

The hand cares for the eye and the eye cares for the hand. Care must be there. That's the most important thing.

Ministries are different. Today we turn to Romans 12, 6. We saw a little bit about the functioning of the human body as a picture of the body of Jesus Christ, the church in our last study. In verse 5, he speaks about we being many are one body in Christ and we must have a care for one another.

And in the body are gifts differing according to the grace given to us in verse 6, it says. Just like God has given to us a measure of faith, verse 3, He's also given to us a differing level of grace. It's grace that makes a man an evangelist.

It's grace that makes a man a teacher. It's grace that makes a man have a healing gift. Grace, free grace.

It's not because of merit. It's because God wants to fulfill a function through that person for His church. So there's no question of competition here.

The hand does not compete with the eye. It cooperates. The ear does not compete with the stomach.

It cooperates. Every part of the body cooperates with one another. The sad thing among many Christians is they have not seen themselves as part of one body.

And I want to say something about the body. It goes way beyond your little church or your little group or your little denomination. The body of Christ is much larger than your little group.

And to accept the members of the body does not mean just accepting those believers who are in your church. I mean, if you can't even do that, well, that's pretty bad. At least you've got to begin there.

But it's got to go beyond that to accept people who may not agree with you on certain doctrines, who look at things slightly differently, but whom God has accepted. Members of one body and who have different emphases. Maybe you don't have a burden which the other person has.

Why should an evangelist try to convert the teacher into an evangelist? That's crazy. It's like the hand trying to convert the eye into a hand. No.

God has given a different function. You've been given grace for a certain ministry. Go ahead and fulfill it.

Let the other person fulfill his. And so he speaks about different gifts here in verse 6 onwards. First of all, prophecy.

Prophecy, we read in 1 Corinthians 14 in verse 3, is speaking to men to exhort them or challenge them, to comfort them or console them, and to edify and build them up. That's the purpose of prophecy. The Old Testament prophet predicted the future very often.

John the Baptist, whom Jesus said was the greatest prophet of all, did not predict anything about the future. He only preached repentance. So the greatest prophet in the Old Testament, John the Baptist, was a man who never predicted the future.

He only preached repentance, turning from sin, and baptized people. So, prophecy is not just predicting the future. That's more rare in New Testament times.

It's more leading people to repentance and to God. Exhorting them, challenging them, convicting them, comforting them, consoling them, building them up in the faith, and building them up in their Christian life. And if that's the gift God's given you, it says here, prophesy according to the proportion of your faith.

Now what does that mean? That is so important. See, all of us have got a certain amount of faith. And the measure of our faith is seen in the measure of our life.

Because the Bible says, the righteous man will live by his faith. So faith and our life are connected. So the measure of our faith, we can say, is the measure of our life.

So we could say that when it says here, prophesy according to the proportion of your faith, in plain simple language, it would mean, don't preach something which is beyond the level of your spiritual life. Don't preach what you haven't practiced. Don't preach what you haven't done.

Preach according to the measure of your life. Another brother who has walked with God longer than you will obviously have a greater measure of life and a greater measure of faith, will naturally be able to speak much more than you can. And the great tragedy in a lot of Christian churches today is people who have a very little measure of life are giving long sermons way beyond the substance there is in their life, the content there is in their life.

And this is what leads to boredom and actually to turn people away from the Lord. What a wonderful word it is. If you prophesy, prophesy according to the proportion of your faith.

There's freedom in the church for different ones to share what is on their heart. But each person must be careful to speak only according to the measure of his life. If you had a church where everybody followed this rule, I believe such a church would have wonderful meetings all the time.

Because each person would only speak according to the measure of his life. And the one who's more mature would be able to give more and the one who's less mature gives less. That's how God intends.

You know there are certain parts of the body which are, which fulfill a greater function. For example, the right hand does more than the left hand. I sign my checks with my right hand and many important functions are done with the right hand.

But the left hand is never jealous of that. The left hand is quite content to allow the right hand to fulfill those important functions and cooperate with it. So if you see God's giving more grace to another person, even in the realm of prophecy, to do more than you can, you should rejoice in it.

You should say, well that's wonderful, that's just a part of my body. Instead of feeling competitive towards that person and say, oh well he's somebody else. Is he really somebody else? Isn't he living for the glory of Jesus Christ as much as you? Even though you may belong to another church.

Oh it's sad what we see in Christendom today. Let's recognize these gifts. Verse 7. If God's given you the gift of service to serve other people, concentrate on your serving.

That's also a gift. You may not have the gift of prophecy, but you may have the gift of being able to help others. Maybe, what does service mean? It probably means things like taking some food to some family where the wife is sick or in hospital.

That's a service. It may not be as exciting as standing in the pulpit and preaching God's word, but it is a gift. And some people have this ability to help others who are in need.

It says, go ahead and do it. And he who teaches. Teaching is different from prophecy.

Prophecy is sharp, speaking straight to a particular need, exposing sin. Teaching is basically directly explaining scripture to people. Some people have that gift.

Let them concentrate on that. Someone has the gift of exhorting. Exhorting is challenging people, maybe very briefly, with a testimony or a word or a word of scripture, challenging them.

And then here it speaks of another gift which a lot of people don't seek. It's the gift of giving money. It says here, he who gives, let him give with liberality.

Do you know that that's also a gift? And I've seen this with some people who have an amazing gift to be able to give for God's work. It's a real gift. And you know, the wonderful thing is that you can never out-give God.

If you give to God, you'll always get back a hundred times. So seek for this gift. He who gives, let him do it with liberality.

In other words, whenever you give to God, don't be stingy, miserly, calculating. No. He says, give liberally.

Here's another gift. Verse 8, of leadership. That's another gift.

You can't have any Tom, Dick or Harry getting up and leading a church. It's just not possible. If they do it, it's going to bring confusion.

God's got to give a man a gift of leadership. And he who leads, let him do it diligently. Let him not do it half-heartedly.

And he who shows mercy, and there in the context of that, mercy it is doing good to those who are in need or poor people, with cheerfulness. Do it cheerfully whenever you show mercy. Like the good Samaritan showed mercy to the man who was fallen by the wayside.

Do it cheerfully and not grudgingly. God loves cheerful givers. And having said all these things about gifts, he goes on to talk about love.

Verse 9. Let your love be without hypocrisy. It's very interesting that this whole section on gifts and the building up of the body and exercising our gifts in the body of Christ verses 4 to 8 is bracketed between two very important verses. Verse 3 on humility and verse 9 on love.

You see, if we keep ourselves in humility and love, it's the only way we can exercise the gifts. Later on, when Paul writes to the Corinthians, we read that he speaks about gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and he goes on to love in chapter 13. It's exactly the same here.

He speaks about gifts and then he goes on to love in verse 9. Any gift exercised without love is going to destroy the body of Christ. If you don't have love, please don't exercise a gift in the body. Just sit quietly at home and you can bless the body that way.

But if you want to exercise a gift, it must be in genuine love. And it says here, don't let your love be with hypocrisy. That means don't pretend to love people.

Be genuinely interested in people. Don't just say, praise the Lord and say good words when in your heart you don't love. I believe there's a lot of hypocritical love in the Christian church that needs to be eliminated.

And he goes on to say, we got to hate what is evil and cling to what is good. A Christian must be one who is constantly, not just avoiding evil. If you want to avoid evil, start hating it.

If you just avoid it, you may one day fall into it. But if your mind is renewed to hate what God hates, and not just to do good, but to cling to what is good. It says about Jesus that he loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

You know the difference between committing sin and hating sin? There's a lot of difference. You know the difference between doing what's right and loving to do what's right? And so here the emphasis is on something that starts in the heart. To love what is good and to cling to that and to hate what is evil.

He goes on to explain that this love that we have for one another must be one which we express freely in the church in devotion to one another. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love, giving preference to one another in honor. Let the other person have honor, pull back in humility.

Don't lag in diligence. Be fervent in spirit. Serve the Lord.

Rejoicing in hope. Persevering in tribulation. Devoted to prayer.

Contributing to the needs of the saints. Practicing hospitality. Number of small, small exhortations that we could profitably spend a lot of time meditating on.

But our love is to manifest itself in all these ways. It's not just talking about love, but all those things that are mentioned there. So if we keep ourselves in humility and in love, we can exercise the gifts God has given us so that we can build up the body of Christ.

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