

**HELP WANTED! NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS!
ROMANS 12:3-8**

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

M.I. HE HOLY SPIRIT HAS GIVEN EVERY BELIEVER A SPIRITUAL GIFT. IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT WE IDENTIFY OUR GIFTS AND USE THEM HUMBLY TO BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST.

I. HUMILITY (Vs. 3)

IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT NONE OF HIS CHILDREN BE PROUD OR ARROGANT. INSTEAD HE WANTS US TO MODEL THE ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR OF HIS SON, OUR LORD, JESUS CHRIST. HUMILITY IS THE PRIMARY WAY CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE IN COMMUNITY.

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Last week, the Apostle Paul begged us to respond appropriately to God's sacrificial love. Since Jesus gave His life for us, the appropriate love response is that we offer our bodies as love sacrifices to Him. We do this by learning to quit allowing the world to force us to conform to its standards and start becoming the people God intends us to be. We do this by embracing the Bible's views of what is good, beautiful, and successful.

We said that as we allow our minds to be filled with Bible truth, God's will, for us will come into focus. This morning, we will start to see and understand the will of God for our lives.

I now want to throw out that warning that I alluded to last week: The problem is most often, not that we don't hear God speak to us, or know what His will for us is; the problem most often is that we don't want to hear the will of God.

This morning we are going to find out that it's God's will for us to identify and use our spiritual gifts. God saved us for the purpose of accomplishing great things. If it is true that faith without works is death, then the church in the United States has a lot of dead people occupying space in the pews every Sunday morning.

Let me give you an example. This would never happen at this church, but you remember the church I used to pastor, the one that was so tough. (How tough was it?) It was so tough that no one would do any work. People wouldn't teach Sunday school. People didn't want to work with the youth group. Even the board chairman didn't want to volunteer for anything.

Well as fate would have it, I was at the chairman of the deacon board's house while he was working on his car. He was sweating and no matter how hard he tried, he just could not get it to work. After a while, I walked over, patted him on the back and encouraged him: "Don't let

it bother you deacon, I have been trying to get you and the church members to work for about 10 years now, and I haven't had much luck either."

Now I know that doesn't happen in our church. But you have to clearly understand the will of God for His people.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he emphatically stated that we are saved by grace through faith. However, he went on to say that we were saved with a purpose. We were saved to carry out all the good works God planned out for us in advance. Now I don't want any of us to miss this because it is very important. We cannot ever get right with God by doing good works or religious stuff. Salvation is a free gift from God. However, once we have been saved, our attitude every morning that we wake up with should be to ask God to make sure and point out all the good works He has for us to accomplish today. We have got to stop being so self-absorbed that all we can think about is what we want to happen and what we want God to do for us. He is our King. He is our Lord. He is our Commander in Chief. He has great plans for us and we need to ask Him what they are.

Let me state the will of God very clearly for each one of us so that no one can leave here this morning saying, "I don't know what God's will for my life is:" **GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS GIVEN EVERY BELIEVER A SPIRITUAL GIFT. IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT WE IDENTIFY OUR GIFTS AND USE THEM HUMBLY TO BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST.**

Now I don't think that is too hard to understand. But I don't think we want to accept it. The first problem that we have to overcome is that we have to stop thinking about church as a building or as an institution. The church is the people, the people of God. You and I are the church and we have a very specific mission. Jesus said that we are to make disciples of all

nations. We do this by telling people about Jesus, leading the lost to salvation. We do this by helping new believers grow to maturity. And a couple of the characteristics of a mature believer is that she is humble, she/he knows what her/his spiritual gift is, she/he understands the concepts of unity and harmony, and she/he is using her/his spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ.

I. HUMILITY (Vs. 3)

IT IS GOD’S WILL THAT NONE OF HIS CHILDREN BE PROUD OR ARROGANT. INSTEAD HE WANTS US TO MODEL THE ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR OF HIS SON, OUR LORD, JESUS CHRIST. HUMILITY IS THE PRIMARY WAY CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE IN COMMUNITY.

Let’s start with humility as described in verse 3: **IT IS GOD’S WILL THAT NONE OF HIS CHILDREN BE PROUD OR ARROGANT. INSTEAD HE WANTS US TO MODEL THE ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR OF HIS SON, OUR LORD, JESUS CHRIST. HUMILITY IS THE PRIMARY WAY CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE IN COMMUNITY.**

A. MUST BE ABLE TO TAKE ORDERS

We in the United States don’t like to take orders. In fact, I think we have a natural bent towards rebelling against authority. We like to think that we are masters of our own destinies. We like to think that we are in control of our futures. But the truth is we were bought at a very high price. We were bought out of slavery by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And God speaks to us through His prophets and Apostles in the Bible. Look at the first phrase in verse 3; this is not a request. This is a command given by the Apostle Paul. Last week in verse 1, he said, “I beg you, I urge you, and I encourage you.” Here in verse 3 he says, “I’m telling you. I say to you, by the grace of God.”

There are two things I want to mention here. First of all, the words grace and gift are going to be used throughout this passage. They come from the same root word. In Greek, grace is “charis” and gift is “charisma.” And further, spiritual gifts are given to us by the grace of God.

God graced Paul with the gift of Apostle. God called Paul to be His authoritative word to the early church. Paul is speaking to the Church of Rome authoritatively. He is telling them clearly what God's will is for them.

Secondly, the word Paul uses here for "I say," is related to "logos." You remember from last week that Paul used a word from this family to describe our appropriate response to God in worship. He used the word "logikein." He used it in this sense; thinking about all the mercies that God has shown us, especially in sending Jesus to die on our behalf, the logical response of worship on our part, is to offer our lives as living, holy, and pleasing sacrifices to Him. In other words, the logical love response on our part is to surrender our lives to God.

Further, we do this by allowing God to change our thinking. We are transformed into beautiful people by the renewing of our minds, and this verse focuses on right thinking. There is no way to do this in English but Paul uses three variations of the word thinking. I will deal with that next but for now, what we need to know is that through the Apostle Paul, God is giving us a command. He is revealing His will for us. And we must be able to take orders.

B. MUST HAVE AN HONEST RESUME

That now brings us to the nature of God's command. In the workplace we would say that you must have an honest resume. Here is where the three variations of the word for thinking present themselves. And they all use the same root word, "phronein." The first command is that we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. The word for thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to is "hyper-think." Paul took the root word think and added the word hyper to it. So Paul is saying that it is God's will that we don't over estimate our importance or our abilities.

You know there are many talented and gifted Christians in all areas of church life. However, the danger is that even though they are talented and gifted in an area, they often are not

mature in people skills areas that are critical. So we are not to overestimate our importance or our skills. After all, the gifts we have been given are just that. They are gifts, nothing we can take credit for.

Instead, we are to realistic-think who we are and what our abilities are. That's what Paul uses to describe sober judgment. In other words, we are to honestly evaluate where we are with our talents, gifts, and abilities. We must evaluate them alongside our maturity level and people skills. He is going to hammer this home because the goal is harmonious community. There is another danger in the Christian community. Many people underestimate their gifts. If we are like a typical American church, most of us don't know what our spiritual gifts are, and many people feel inadequate to get involved in ministry. Now I want us to take what I'm about to say to heart; sometimes we think a person who is hesitant to get involved in ministry is being humble. But people who are reluctant to get involved in ministry, people who underestimate their importance and abilities are being just as prideful and arrogant as those who overestimate theirs. You may say, "That makes no sense."

But think about it. Both are coming from the same perspective. They are both focused on self and what they can accomplish on their own. If the one who overestimates his importance would humbly realize that the gift is from God, he would immediately take himself down a few notches. If the one who underestimates her importance would realize this gift comes from God, she would then exercise the gift.

C. MUST BE WILLING TO WORK

Which brings us to the point that since God has given us spiritual gifts; we are called to put them to work. We must be willing to work. As we humbly evaluate our abilities, we must put them to work at the level and intensity of our maturity. Look at the last phrase in verse 3.

We are to evaluate ourselves in accordance with the measure of faith God has given us. Scholars disagree with what this phrase means. Broadly, they fall into two camps.

The first group of scholars says that the measure of faith given to us by God is a subjective measure. God has given different degrees of faith to each one of us; God gives us each a specific gift and a degree of faith to use the gift. So two of us can have the same gift of showing mercy, but God might give us differing degrees of faith to exercise the gift. One of us could be of great faith and use our gift like Mother Teresa, ministering to the dying outcasts in India, or a Father Damien, ministering to Lepers.

On the other hand, God may have given us the gift of showing mercy with a small degree of faith and we may use our gift in the context of our local church, simply visiting sick congregation members.

So the first group of scholars defines this measure as subjective while the second group of scholars defines the measure as objective. The measure of faith is the propositional truths as spelled out in the Bible. It is the collection of Christian truths throughout the centuries. So we should use and conform our gifts to the Biblical text. What this group of scholars is saying is that when we evaluate ourselves, we should do so by measuring ourselves up to the commands of the Bible.

Like I have consistently done throughout our study through the book of Romans, I will take a strong stand. I think they're both right, only I'd like to put a little twist on it. First of all, there is no doubt that faith itself is a gift from God. I cannot make myself have more faith and I do think that God uses the measure of faith to get all of us to different parts of the world to do ministry. But secondly, I think the objective measure is one of understanding the nature of grace and gifts. The standard of understanding is grasping what it means to be saved by grace through faith. The more authentic understanding we have of this concept, the more humble we will

become. True humility is the objective measure of faith. That is why I think that being raised in the church is often a hindrance to our maturing as believers. We never quite understand how horrible our sin is. We never seem to understand that it was my personal sin that sent Jesus to that dirty and messy sacrifice. We never seem to understand that my personal sin affects, dirties, and brings down the rest of the church. Good people never seem to mature according to the measure of faith that is defined by salvation by grace through faith.

Just think about the person who has the gift of showing mercy who has a deep sense of how his personal sin sent Jesus to the cross and how his sin has hurt his fellow believers. That person who has a mature grasp of grace can certainly administer mercy at a very intense level. I think that we can legitimately simplify describing a mature Christian attitude by equating it to true humility. Do we want to know God's will? Do we want to hear His voice? **IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT NONE OF HIS CHILDREN BE PROUD OR ARROGANT. INSTEAD HE WANTS US TO MODEL THE ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR OF HIS SON, OUR LORD, JESUS CHRIST. HUMILITY IS THE PRIMARY WAY CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE IN COMMUNITY.**

II. HARMONY (Vs. 4-6a)

IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT WE HAVE A SOLID UNDERSTANDING HOW DIVERSITY AND UNITY WORK TOGETHER TO PRODUCE HARMONY. OUT OF MANY... ONE!

Now even though humility is the primary way we are to live in community, we must know what the Christian community is characterized by. Verses 4 through the first half of verse 6 gives us a Biblical definition of harmony. If humility is a characteristic of a mature believer, then harmony is a characteristic of a mature church: **IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT WE HAVE A SOLID UNDERSTANDING OF HOW DIVERSITY AND UNITY WORK TOGETHER TO PRODUCE HARMONY. OUT OF MANY, ONE.** I think that we often mistake unison for harmony. Let me just share with you why I think non-Christians are boring. They think and

follow the crowd. But Christians, they're exciting. God created each one to be different. We worship differently. We pray differently. We think differently. We talk differently. And then to top it off, we have different spiritual gifts. And even the spiritual gifts will look different in different cultures. Showing mercy may look completely different in let's say an Italian as it would a Chinese. Teaching may look different in an African setting than it would in a Spanish setting. God has put His Spirit and His gifts in people from every tribe, every nation, and every tongue.

A. MUST HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF TEAM WORK (V. 4)

As verse 4 points out, we must have an understanding of teamwork. Let me digress for just a moment; in verse three Paul addresses every person, saying each believer has a spiritual gift and a particular function. The point is that as diverse as we are there are that many different manifestations of the spiritual gifts.

Now what else is interesting is that the Apostle Paul seems to be writing this letter from Corinth. If you remember, the church at Corinth arguably had the most dramatic manifestation of the spiritual gifts; they were the charismatic church of the day. However, they didn't have a clue that the gifts were to be used in a team effort. Everybody wanted to be a superstar, they were using the gifts to glorify themselves and they were dividing and destroying the church with their spiritual gifts.

That's why here in verse 3 Paul prefaced the section with the call for humility. The thing that we must understand is that harmony requires diversity. If everybody had one gift, then only one thing would get done in the church. There is a lot of work to be done and so many different types of gifts are required.

B. MUST HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIG PICTURE (V. 5)

And that brings us to verse 5. We must have an understanding of the big picture. Christ is the head of the church. The church becomes His physical presence on earth. Jesus' mission was to set people free from sin, Satan, and death. Jesus came to minister to the sick and the lowly. Jesus came to empower us to live up to our full potential in God. Here is the point; we belong to one another. The reason we have lost this idea is because we have all embraced this American idea of individualism. We have come to believe that my actions only affect me. My successes are mine and my failures are mine. The consequences of my behavior only affect me. That is good American thinking but it is horrible theology. The truth is that my behavior affects the whole body of Christ. For example, if I am a hypocrite and people see me act just like unbelievers, then I give all believers a bad name. If I am judgmental or nasty, then all believers get that reputation among the people I come in contact with. If I am controlling or legalistic, unbelievers tend to generalize all believers to be likewise.

Let's get local. If I am humbly exercising my spiritual gift, then people here at Devon Church are benefiting. And if people are benefiting, then they will in turn be able to affect other people's lives here for good. Let me give you an example: If I have been given the gift of teaching, and if I am humbly teaching, then people with the gift of showing mercy will better be able to bring comfort to the people they visit with sound biblical teaching. People with the gift of giving or leading, etc. will all be able to minister better with a strong biblical understanding.

On the other hand, if I have the gift of teaching, and I am not using it, or I am arrogantly using it, there will be defective ministry happening in all areas because of false or no biblical teaching. There will be no solid foundation for the ministry. We are absolutely dependent on one another. I want you to understand this because the very health and future of Devon Church depends on this. If you are a Christian, then it is your responsibility to identify your spiritual gift and use it to help us fulfill the mission Jesus has given us as a body. And back to the living

sacrifice. Sin prevents us from effectively using our gifts. If you are stuck in sinful thinking or sinful behavior, then that not only cripples you as an individual, it cripples all of us.

C. MUST HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR SPECIALTY (V. 6a)

As the first half of verse 6 illustrates, we must have an understanding of our specialty. Here Paul reminds us that our gifts are just that, gifts from God. They are nothing to be proud about; and we are to exercise them according to the measure of humility given us. You see harmony not only requires us to know our part. Harmony requires us to humbly blend in. We are not to be too loud or too soft. Humility rebukes arrogance. All the gifts are to blend with each other.

Keep this in mind. As we said before, the Church at Rome was a very diverse church, just like ours. There were Jew and Gentile believers. There were rich and poor, educated and uneducated. There were people from many different races and cultures. The challenge for them and the challenge for us; is to remember we are one body because we were all saved the same way by One Lord, Jesus Christ. Everybody has been given a spiritual gift and the health of the whole body is dependent on each person discovering and using their gift with humility. Harmony, biblical harmony is God's blending all the different manifestations of spiritual gifts and blending them into one beautiful song, under the direction of Jesus Christ: **IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT WE HAVE A SOLID UNDERSTANDING OF HOW DIVERSITY AND UNITY WORK TOGETHER TO PRODUCE HARMONY. OUT OF MANY, ONE.**

III. UTILITY (Vs. 6b-8)

IT IS GOD' WILL THAT WE IDENTIFY OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND USE THEM FOR HIS GLORY BY BUILDING ONE ANOTHER UP.

It is God's will for us as individuals to exercise humility. It is God's will for our church to operate with harmony. It is God who gives out gifts according to the principle of utility as described in the second half of verse 6 through verse 8. The Bible indicates that God gives out

spiritual gifts according to the needs of the church. God will look at our church and distribute all the spiritual gifts among us to ensure that we can accomplish our mission. Again, let me say, if you are not using your spiritual gift, or if you are using a spiritual gift you don't really have, then you are hurting the rest of us. Here is the point: **IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT WE IDENTIFY OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND USE THEM FOR HIS GLORY BY BUILDING ONE ANOTHER UP.** Paul goes on in this section to list 7 spiritual gifts. Other gifts are mentioned in Ephesians and Corinthians. So this list is by no means exhaustive. I am only going to summarize these gifts because we cannot do justice to each one in a sermon. However, I want to inform you that in May, I will be attending a seminar that prepares church leaders to help all the people identify and use their spiritual gifts.

You see, perhaps when people want to become members we should say, "Exactly what job are you applying for?" It is imperative that all of us identify and use our spiritual gifts. If we are not, then we don't meet the biblical definition of a local church.

A. PROPHECY (V. 6b)

The first gift Paul describes is prophecy. Prophecy is basically speaking forth the word of God. It can be calling people to obey what is written in the bible, or it can be a prediction or warning about the future. So, biblical prophecy can involve foretelling, forth telling, or both.

Now people with the gift of prophecy are to use the gift in proportion to their faith. The first measure of faith we already said is humility. In the New Testament, the gift of prophecy is to be subjected to the other prophets. In other words, in contrast to the Old Testament prophet, the New Testament prophet must take her message to the other prophets and submit it to them for confirmation. The second measure of the portion of faith is by what God has spoken. Prophets are to speak no more or no less than God instructs them to speak. And finally the message must measure up to the revealed truth of God in the Bible.

B. SERVING (V. 7a)

The next gift is found in verse 7. It is the gift of serving. The word here in Greek is “diakonia.” You may recognize this word; it is the word we get deacon from. This gift means to minister to others. The ministry can refer to ministry in the word; it can involve preaching, teaching, or evangelism. Or it can refer to ministry in meeting the needs of the congregation, administration, pastoring, giving, showing mercy, etc. The role of deacons is meant to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the congregation.

C. TEACHING (V. 7b)

Teaching is the next gift on the list. The role of the teacher is to feed the body. Teaching refers to the passing on the truths of Scripture. The body cannot grow if it is not nourished and likewise, the body must move beyond just being fed with milk, it must move on to solid food. If we as a church are going to grow spiritually, we must crave solid spiritual teaching and we must continue to develop teachers.

D. ENCOURAGING (V. 8a)

Next, encouraging is mentioned. This is a neat gift and it is a lot of fun to be around these people. The word can mean encourage, exhort, comfort, or cheer on. These people are the cheerleaders. The Apostles, prophets, deacons, and teachers all give us what God calls us to do. The encouragers are the people who say, “We can do it. Let’s go for it. Let’s never give up” They provide the energy for us to accomplish what we know God is calling us to do. There are no negative people who have this gift.

E. GIVING (V. 8b)

Then giving is mentioned as a gift. These are people who usually don’t value money very much. They can be rich or poor; it doesn’t matter. They enjoy giving and sharing what

they have. They do it quietly not publicly. Also when they give, they don't make people feel inferior and people never feel as if they owe them. This too is a great gift.

F. LEADING (V. 8c)

Leadership is mentioned next. Leaders include elders, deacons, board members, committee chairs, etc. They must have an extraordinary hold on humility and a solid understanding of harmony. Good leaders empower they don't control. And finally, Paul lists showing mercy as a gift. Notice that people with the gift of showing mercy must be able to do it cheerfully. Some people do ministry because they are trying to solve their own issues.

G. SHOWING MERCY (V. 8d)

The problem with trying to show mercy when your own issues are involved is that the recipient will feel your judgment not your mercy, and sooner or later you will burn out. If you are dealing with a lot of emotional issues, then my guess is that you don't have this gift. However, if you have successfully come out of a lot of emotional stuff, then God often uses these types of grace filled, grace understanding people to dispense mercy.

The point is this: God dispenses gifts for His glory and good of His church. God does not dispense gifts so we can use them for our glory. God does not dispense gifts so we can decide whether or not we want to use them. If we have not identified our spiritual gifts and are not humbly using them, then we are not yet mature Christians. There is no option here. God has given us gifts and if we are not using them, we are not living up to our potential and we are holding everyone else back: **IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT WE IDENTIFY OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND USE THEM FOR HIS GLORY BY BUILDING ONE ANOTHER UP.**

The Christian life is all about passionate love. Our reasonable act of worship is to offer our bodies as holy, living, and pleasing sacrifices to God. We do this by identifying our spiritual gifts and using them to build one another up: **GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS GIVEN**

EVERY BELIEVER A SPIRITUAL GIFT. IT IS GOD’S WILL THAT WE IDENTIFY OUR GIFTS AND USE THEM HUMBLY TO BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST. I am going to preach more about love next week, but out of love for God and love for one another, we are to give ourselves in service for the building up of our church.

Kent Hughes writes,

“When Niccolo Paganini willed his elegant violin to the city of Genoa, he demanded that it never be used. It was a gift designated for preservation but not destined for service.

When the resurrected Christ willed His spiritual gifts to the children of God, He commanded that they be used. They were gifts not destined for preservation but destined for service.”

I want to encourage each of us that God’s will is that we find and exercise our gifts in humility, and that we humbly use our gifts to build a harmoniously unified community.