

“THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

“Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gift”

Scripture Reading – Romans, 11:33 – 12:6a

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever! Amen.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.

‘With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-make you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed. Thus you will prove in practice that the will of God is good, acceptable to him and perfect.’

Romans, 12:1-2, JBP

This series is based on ‘THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT’.

According to Scripture, every saved person has, at the time of their conversion, received a birthday gift from God through the Holy Spirit. Only when this gift is discovered, developed, and deployed can the Christian be really fulfilled in his life, ministry, and service. Only when every Christian faithfully deploys his gift will the Body of Christ function effectively and grow.

You are a gifted child. Did you know that?

Not only has God given you a gift, but he has also issued you a call to be a living sacrifice. Your gift is to come full circle back into his presence as a gift to him. God has equipped you in a special way for his special purpose at this special time. And you are to discover that gift (you’ve got at least one), develop it, and deploy it for the glory of our Lord.

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Church Life\The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit \02 Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gifts

EVERYBODY IS SOMEBODY IN HIS BODY

‘The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.’

I Corinthians, 12:12, NIV

We are the Body of Christ. Jesus is the head and we are the members. Paul compares the Body of Christ to a human body. Each part has a specific function that is necessary to the body as a whole. The parts are different for a purpose, and in their differences they must work together. The Body of Christ exists to show Jesus and to serve him. We best do that when we are engaged in fulfilling his purpose and being motivated by the Holy Spirit – the Breath of God.

ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS

‘Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.’

I Corinthians, 12:1, NIV

As a part of the Body of Christ: **(i)** we understand the same truth – we do not remain ignorant of spiritual matters; **(ii)** we confess the same Lord – Jesus is God; **(iii)** we depend on the same God – because the Father, Son and Spirit are involved; and, **(iv)** we minister to the same body – the Church, which is the Body of Christ

“UNWRAPPING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT”

How would you feel if you gave someone a gift and he simply ignored it?

Imagine that you had spent a considerable amount of money on the gift, and some time personally wrapping it, and he just left it on the table and never opened it. Chances are that if he decided not even to acknowledge it, then you would feel offended and unhappy.

If you are saved, God has given you at least one spiritual gift.

I wonder how the Lord would feel if you simply ignored it, or reused to unwrap (or discover) it. I guess God would be offended and unhappy at your ungratefulness. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, you and I will be called to account how we have used or misused these spiritual gifts.

Sometimes, we receive gifts that, if truth were told, we do not want.

However, when it comes to your Spiritual Gift, God has given it to you because he knows that this is the one gift that if you will receive it and use it, it will enable you to be fulfilled and joyful.

Alexander the Great once gave a goblet to a servant who looked at it and, recognising its value, proclaimed: “This is too much for me to receive”.

Alexander looked at him and said: “But it is not too much for me to give”.

Paul gives us three pointers which will help us unwrap our spiritual gifts...

1. A SACRIFICIAL PRESENTATION

‘Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.’
Romans, 12:1, NIV

Paul urges us to make a sacrificial presentation.

He ‘URGES’... he ‘PLEADS’... he ‘BEGS’ us to offer ourselves, our bodies, as living sacrifices.

URGE ‘to advise somebody strongly, to advocate something earnestly, to encourage somebody or something: to excite or stimulate somebody’ (*Microsoft World English Dictionary*).

Why would we be willing to make such a sacrificial presentation?

‘With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him.’

Romans, 12:1, JBP

What are the mercies of God?

He sought us... He saved us... He satisfied us... He sanctified us... He secures us...

‘True Christian service and living must begin with personal dedication to the Lord. The Christian who fails in life is the one who has first failed at the altar, refusing to surrender completely to Christ. The motive for dedication is love; Paul does not write, “I COMMAND YOU” but “I BESEECH YOU, BECAUSE OF WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY DONE FOR YOU”. We do not serve Christ in order to receive his mercies, because we already have them. We serve him out of love and appreciation.’

Warren W Wiersbe

Paul urges us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.

‘When sacrificing an animal according to God’s law, a priest would kill the animal, cut it in pieces, and place it on the altar. Sacrifice was important, but even in the Old Testament God made it clear that obedience from the heart was much more important. God wants us to offer ourselves, not animals, as living sacrifices – daily laying aside our own desires to follow him, putting all our energy and resources at his disposal and trusting him to guide us. We do this out of gratitude that our sins have been forgiven.’

“LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE”, Study Notes

A sacrifice has no rights of its own... It is a forgotten commodity.

One thing you cannot say as ‘A LIVING SACRIFICE’ is that you do not want to be tied down...

In the Old Testament, two hooks called ‘FLESH HOOKS’ were used to keep the blood soaked sacrifice on the altar. These hooks were placed in the animal so that it would not slide off the polished surface. There are two hooks that will keep you on the altar today – ‘DISCIPLINE’ and ‘DEVOTION’. Without them, it is far too easy to slide off, or slide away, from the altar.

Of course, the offering was accepted by God when it was consumed by fire.

On Mount Carmel, Elijah saw the fire consume the animal, the wood, the altar, even the water.

*To make our weak hearts strong and brave, send the fire!
To live a dying world to save, send the fire!
O see us on thy altar lay our lives, our all, this very day,
To crown the offering now we pray, send the fire!*

William Booth, SASB 203:4

‘So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.’

Romans, 12:1, Msg

‘A man may say, “I am going to church to worship God”, but he should also be able to say, “I am going to the factory, the shop, the office, the school, the garage, the locomotive shed, the mine, the shipyard, the field, the byre, the garden, to worship God” ... “So”, Paul says, “take your body; take all the tasks that you have to do every day; take the ordinary work of the shop, the factory, the shipyard, the mine; and offer all that as an act of worship to God”.’

William Barclay

2. A SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

‘Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.’

Romans, 12:2, NIV

‘Paul warned Christians: “DON’T COPY THE BEHAVIOUR AND CUSTOMS OF THIS WORLD” that are usually selfish and often corrupting. Wise Christians decide that much worldly behaviour is off-limits for them. Our refusal to conform to this world’s values, however, must go even deeper than just behaviour and customs; it must be firmly planted in our mind: “LET GOD TRANSFORM YOU INTO A NEW PERSON BY CHANGING THE WAY YOU THINK”. It is possible to avoid most worldly customs and still be proud, covetous, selfish, stubborn, and arrogant. Only when the Holy Spirit renews, re-educates, and redirects our mind are we truly transformed.’

“LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE”, Study Notes

The Greek word that Paul uses gives us our word ‘METAMORPHOSIS’.

It is applied when an animal undergoes a change of form, or a transformation...

For example, a tadpole metamorphosis into a frog; and according to the fairytale, it becomes a prince! A caterpillar metamorphosis into a chrysalis; and it metamorphosis into a butterfly.

METAMORPHOSIS **(i)** change of physical form: a complete or marked change of physical form, structure, or substance; **(ii)** change of appearance or character: a complete or marked change in appearance, character, or condition; **(iii)** transformed person or thing: somebody or something that has gone through a complete or marked change’ (*Microsoft World English Dictionary*).

'The world wants to control your mind, but God wants to transform your mind. This word 'TRANSFORM' is the same as 'TRANSFIGURE' in Matthew, 17:2. It has come into our English language as the word 'METAMORPHOSIS'. It describes a change from within. The world wants to change your mind, so it exerts pressure from without. But the Holy Spirit changes your mind by releasing power from within. If the world controls your thinking, you are a conformer; if God controls your thinking, you are a transformer. God transforms our minds and makes us spiritually minded by using his Word. As you spend time meditating on God's Word, memorizing it, and making it a part of your inner man, God will gradually make your mind more spiritual.'

Warren W Wiersbe

A spiritual metamorphosis is when the inner nature comes to the surface.

When Jesus was 'TRANSFIGURED' on the Mount of Transfiguration, he displayed his inner nature. Jesus revealed himself to be full of the glory of God – and the disciples saw him!

'Jesus was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.'

Matthew, 17:2, NIV

What inner nature would you display?

We should all be displaying the inner nature of Jesus. The same Jesus who is resident within us should become the Jesus who is the president of us. The same Jesus who is hidden within our lives is revealed to others by our own actions.

*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,
All his wonderful passion and purity,
O thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine,
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.*

Albert Orsborn, SACS 77

A renewed mind would enable us to share in the mind of Christ.

'God has good, pleasing, and perfect plans for his children. He wants us to be transformed people with renewed minds, living to honour and obey him. Because he wants only what is best for us, and because he gave his Son to make our new life possible, we should joyfully give ourselves as living sacrifices for his service.'

"LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE", Study Notes

*O that in me the mind of Christ a fixed abiding-place may find,
That I may know the will of God, and live in him for lost mankind.*

*O that in me this mind might be, the will of God be all my joy,
Prepared with him to go or stay, my chief delight his sweet employ.*

*Doing the will of God, doing the will of God,
The best thing I know in this world below is doing the will of God.*

Edward Henry Joy, SASB 451:1, 3

3. A SOBER CONSIDERATION

'For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.'

Romans, 12:3, NIV

'Beneath this passage lie very important rules for life... First of all, it urges us to know ourselves. One of the first basic commandments of the Greek wise men was: 'Man, know thyself'. We do not get very far in this world until we know what we can and what we cannot do. An honest assessment of our own capabilities, without conceit and without false modesty, is one of the first essentials of a useful life.'

"THE DAILY STUDY BIBLE", Study Notes

Twice in this verse, Paul uses the word 'THINK'.

As Christians, we do not live on feelings, shivers, or goose pimples. Instead, we have a rational mind – one which has been transformed – so we know something of the mind of Christ. We have to remember that becoming a Christian means that we still have to 'THINK'.

THINK *(i) to use the mind to consider ideas and make judgments; (ii) to comprehend something; to imagine or understand something or the possibility of something' (Microsoft World English Dictionary).*

There are two mistakes that some Christians have in their thinking:



SINFUL EXAGGERATION

Some Christians exaggerate the truth.

FALSE HUMILIATION

Some Christians ignore the truth.

The key is to get a balance – to have a sober judgment and to be with sober estimation.

'Healthy self-esteem is important because some of us think too little of ourselves; on the other hand, some of us overestimate ourselves. The key to an honest and accurate self-evaluation is knowing the basis of our self-worth – our identity in Christ. Apart from him, we aren't capable of very much by eternal standards; in him, we are valuable and capable of worthy service. Evaluating yourself by the worldly standards of success and achievement can cause you to think too much about your worth in the eyes of others and thus miss your true value in God's eyes.'

"LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE", Study Notes

'We have different gifts, according to the grace given us...'

Romans, 12:6a, NIV

Consider life at the animal school for sports. Events include swimming, running, climbing. The duck was forced to train to run and climb and could no longer swim. The eagle was forced to swim but left in disgrace. The turtle was too slow and so they took off his shell. He was trampled on by the horse!

Ridiculous? So is trying to be what God has not equipped you to be!