

Subject: *Serving Our Lord Together*

Scripture: *Romans 12:1-8*

We are saved to serve. After WW2, a group of German students volunteered to help rebuild an old English cathedral that had been damaged in the war. They worked hard to restore a statue of Christ with outstretched arms with this inscription: "Come unto Me." They were unable to restore the hands of Christ to their original condition, so they decided to leave the statue with the hands of Christ missing, and they changed the inscription to read: "Christ has no hands but ours." The work of Christ is in the hands of those who belong to Christ. In salvation Christ did something for us so He might do something in us and then do something through us.

Ephesians 2:8-10⁸ *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

In order to serve Christ as we should, we must understand three things that we find in our text.

1. HONEST EVALUATION OF OURSELVES (vs. 3)

Paul has already reminded us about the salvation of our soul, the presentation of our body, the transformation of our mind, and the dedication of our will. Now he says there must be a proper estimation of ourselves. He is saying this as God's apostle or chosen spokesman (through the grace of God given to me). He is saying this to everyone in the church (to everyone who is among you). He reminds us to think soberly (clearly) about ourselves. There is a danger that we overvalue ourselves or undervalue ourselves. It is wrong to make either mistake.

- A. We may think too much of ourselves (pride)
- B. We may think too little of ourselves (false humility)
- C. We should think correctly of ourselves

Don't exalt yourself and don't belittle yourself, but think clearly about yourself. True humility doesn't mean you think of yourself as no good; it means that whatever goodness there is in you is from God. Paul understood that and we need to understand it too.

1 Corinthians 15:10 *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

2. FAITHFUL COOPERATION WITH OTHERS (vs. 4-5)

This is the first time that Paul refers to the church as the body of Christ. It is one of many images of the church found in the Bible:

We are all sheep in God's flock.
We are all branches in God's vine.
We are all living stones in God's temple.
We are all brothers and sisters in God's family.
We are all part of the bride of Christ.
We are all members in the body of Christ.

All of these figures have one common theme...we are one in Christ. Now the figure of a human body reminds us of two things: there is unity and diversity, one body and many members. We are all in the same body, we have the same head (Christ), and we are connected to one another. We need one another. We are not to be independent, but we are to be interdependent. Paul develops this idea in 1 Corinthians 12.

1 Corinthians 12:14-21 ¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? ¹⁸ But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where were the body? ²⁰ But now are they many members, yet but one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

3. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION WITH OUR GIFTS (vs. 6-8)

Every believer should use his or her spiritual gift for the good of others and the glory of God. Spiritual gifts are God-given abilities to serve others in and through the local church. These gifts are not toys to play with, but tools to build up others. Here in Romans 12, Paul mentions seven gifts. He gives another list of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. Two broad categories of spiritual gifts are mentioned in 1 Peter 4, the speaking gifts and the serving gifts. There Peter reminds us to use our gifts as good stewards of the manifold grace of God so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. Let's look at the ones found here in our text:

A. Prophesying (preaching)

The idea of prophesying is speaking on behalf of God. This included foretelling and forthtelling. There is one big difference in prophecy then and now. In Bible times the prophet spoke as God's mouthpiece and what he said was revealed truth inspired by God. Today preachers do not speak new truth from God, but we preach the truth already given. Prophesying should be according to the proportion of faith, that is, in keeping with God's provision of faith and power.

B. Ministering (serving)

This is the same word translated "deacon," and it means serving others. It's obvious that most people don't have the gift of speaking, but many have the gift of serving. For every person who teaches from a pulpit or in a classroom, far more people are in the background doing all kinds of service for the Lord.

C. Teaching

This has to do with interpreting, explaining, and applying God's Word. The gift of teaching enables a person to analyze, organize, and present truth so it can be understood and lived. In Acts 8, Philip asked the Ethiopian: "Do you understand what you are reading?" He answered: "How can I except some man should guide me?" That's where the gift of teaching comes in.

D. Exhorting

This is the same word used of the Holy Spirit (the Comforter). It means someone who comes alongside to help or encourage.

E. Giving

This involves giving to help people in need. The church as a whole has a ministry to help the needy, but this refers to individuals within the church who have the special desire and ability to meet personal needs. This should be done with simplicity. That means with an undivided heart or pure motive.

F. Ruling (leading)

This word means “to stand before” others. This is the ability to set a plan of action and lead others. It includes the ability to oversee and coordinate details for the accomplishment of a task. This gift should be used with diligence (zeal or enthusiasm).

G. Mercy

This is kindness toward others in need. It could involve visiting the sick or the bereaved, just like the Good Samaritan took care of the man who was beaten and robbed. A person with the gift of mercy is like a ray of sunshine in a dark place.

Which one of these gifts is most important? They are all important and they must be used for the good of others and the glory of God.

We have a responsibility to God and a responsibility to one another to use our gifts. Warren Wiersbe put it this way: “If life is to have meaning, and God’s will is to be done, all of us have to accept who we are and what we are, give it back to God, and thank Him for the way He made us. What I am is God’s gift to me. What I do with it is my gift to Him.”