

QUESTIONS ABOUT CHURCH

Why Should I Be Involved In Church?

Christ Brings New Life- The gifts in action

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Paul speaks here through the grace that was given to him as an apostle of the Lord Jesus. He is going to deal with various forms of straight and crooked thinking.

First he says that there is nothing in the gospel that would encourage anyone to have a superiority complex.

He urges us to be humble in exercising our gifts. We should never have exaggerated ideas of our own importance. Neither should we be envious of others.

Rather, we should realize that each person is unique and that we all have an important function to perform for our Lord.

We should be happy with the place God has dealt to us in the Body, and we should seek to exercise our gifts with all the strength that God supplies.

Romans 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,

The human body has many members, yet each one has a unique role to play.

The health and welfare of the body depend on the proper functioning of each member.

Romans 12:5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

That is how it is in the body of Christ. There is unity (one body), diversity (many), and interdependency (members of one another).

Any gifts we have are not for selfish use or display but for the good of the body.

No gift is self-sufficient and none is unnecessary. When we realize all this, we are thinking soberly (12:3).

Romans 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

Paul now gives instructions for the use of certain gifts. The list does not cover all the gifts; it is meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive.

Our gifts differ according to the grace that is given to us. In other words, God's grace deals out differing gifts to different people. And God gives the necessary strength or ability to use whatever gifts we have. So we are responsible to use these God-given abilities as good stewards.

Those who have the gift of prophecy should prophesy in proportion to their faith. A prophet is a spokesman for God, declaring the word of the Lord. Prediction may be involved, but it is not a necessary element of prophecy.

In the early church, writes Hodge, the prophets were "men who spoke under the immediate influence of the Spirit of God, and delivered some divine communication relative to doctrinal truths, to present duty, to future events, as the case may be."

There can be no inspired, prophetic additions to the body of Christian doctrine today since the faith has been once for all delivered to the saints (see Jude 3). Thus a prophet today is simply one who declares the mind of God as it has been revealed in the Bible.

Strong says: All modern prophecy that is true is but the republication of Christ's message—the proclamation and expounding of truth already revealed in Scripture.

Those of us who have the gift of prophecy should prophesy in proportion to our faith. This may mean “according to the rule or norm of the faith”—that is, in accordance with the doctrines of the Christian faith as they are found in the Scriptures. Or it may mean “according to the proportion of our faith”—that is, to the extent that God gives us faith. Most versions supply the word “our” here, but it is not found in the original.

Romans 12:7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;

Ministry is a very broad term meaning service for the Lord.

It does not mean the office, duties, or functions of a clergyman (as commonly used today). The person who has the gift of ministry has a servant-heart. He sees opportunities to be of service and seizes them.

A teacher is one who is able to explain the word of God and apply it to the hearts of his hearers.

Whatever our gift is, we should give ourselves to it wholeheartedly.

Romans 12:8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Exhortation is the gift of stirring up the saints to desist from every form of evil and to press on to new achievements for Christ in holiness and in service.

Giving is the divine endowment which inclines and empowers a person to be aware of needs and to help meet them. He should do so with liberality.

The gift of leading is almost certainly connected with the work of elders (and perhaps also deacons) in a local church. The elder is an undershepherd who stands out in front of the flock and leads with care and diligence.

The gift of mercy is the supernatural capacity and talent of aiding those who are in distress. Those who have this gift should exercise it with cheerfulness. Of course, we should all show mercy and do it cheerfully.

A Christian lady once said, “When my mother became old and needed someone to care for her, my husband and I invited her to come and live with us. I did all I could to make her comfortable. I cooked for her, did her washing, took her out in the car, and generally cared for all her needs. But while I was going through the motions outwardly, I was unhappy inside. Subconsciously I resented the interruption of our usual schedule. Sometimes my mother would say to me, ‘You never smile anymore. Why don't you ever smile?’ You see, I was showing mercy, but I wasn't doing it with cheerfulness.”

Rules for Christian Living

Romans 12:9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

Next Paul lists some characteristics that every believer should develop in his dealings with other Christians and with the unconverted. Love should be without hypocrisy. It should not wear a mask, but should be genuine, sincere, and unaffected.

We should abhor all forms of evil and cling to everything good.

In this setting evil probably means all attitudes and acts of unlove, malice, and hatred. Good, by contrast, means every manifestation of supernatural love.

Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

In our relations with those who are in the household of faith, we should demonstrate our love by tender affection, not by cool indifference or routine acceptance.