



The Ministry of Spiritual Gifts

February 16, 2025

Romans 12:3-8

(video 46:13)

Well, if that doesn't fire you up to turn to Romans 12, nothing will. Turn to Romans chapter 12 because let's see what Almighty God has in store for us in answer to that prayer. And I wanna start out by simply reading, we've covered Romans one and two, although in a way we're gonna get a new angle and slant on it today. But I wanted to come back and get to verses three, four, five and six, or at least get started with it. They are so rich, they are so good, they are so practical. And let's just start off by reading it together. And let's start at verse one to give us the context. Romans chapter 12:1, New American Standard. ***I urge you therefore, brethren, speaking to believers, by the mercies of God,...*** all those things I've laid out for you in 11 chapters of the word of God, Paul says, by the mercies of God, to what? ***...to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual, your logical, your reason in the area of the spirit, your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be metamorphosed, be transformed by the renewing of your mind...*** Garbage in, garbage out. It starts, the battle with sin and the striving for holiness starts, between your ears. ***...by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove, you may live out and demonstrate the sincerity and the genuineness of the fact that you truly have committed your life to God in spiritual worship. You will prove ...what God's will is, because your will will be submitted to it, because that's what you do when you humbly present your body a living sacrifice. Your body, your mind, your soul, your spirit, your will, your thinking, your conduct, your all as a spiritual sacrifice to God. And you'll prove out by the evidence ...that which is good and that which is acceptable, meaning well-pleasing, and that which is perfect that which is mature in accordance with what God says maturity is. For, here we go,***



for, and that's a connecting word, because ultimately it starts with presenting your bodies and worship to God, and then it goes to service. It's very practical. We start out in the spirit of the Christian life by presenting yourself to God in total submission, Lordship to Almighty God, and every day, as spiritual sacrifice, we give ourselves over and over and over again to the control and to God moment by moment. That's our act of worship, but it leads to something. Service, it's always worship and then service. It's commitment and dedication and then conduct. And here's the conduct, ***for through the grace given to me***, Paul says, and we're gonna explain what all this means this week and next, for the grace given to me, ***I say to every man among you***, that's generic, man, woman, child, believer, ***I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment***, (Some of your translations might say soberly, sound judgment. It means being in your right mind, by the way. Sound judgment, how?) ***as God has allotted to each a measure of faith***. That's one of those phrases you hear, we read, you memorize, you gloss over, and you're not really sure, though, of thinking through what it means. We're gonna get there. Today, next week, two weeks, we're gonna get there. "Measure of faith" and what that means. As God has allotted to each a measure of faith. Verse four, ***for just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function***, what's he talking about? You got an arm, a hand, a foot, a leg, an eye, a finger, a tongue, a nose, a mouth, the ear doesn't do what the mouth does, my little finger doesn't do what my left big toe does, et cetera, many members, one body, he's using that by analogy, obviously, the physical body. ***For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another***. That is an incredibly powerful phrase that I'm gonna unpack next



week. ***And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us each exercise them accordingly.*** Let me just stop right there.

So, what's he talking about here? Well, let me give you an example that if you get nothing else out of this today, this example will illustrate where we're going. After World War II, there was a group of German Christian college students who had societal guilt, if you will, over what their country had done, not they didn't do it, they were believers in Christ, but what their country had done in World War II. And so, they volunteered to totally renovate and rebuild a chapel, a church, a cathedral, really, over in London, England that had been bombed by German bombs during World War II. And so, they're going along for months going through this renovation rebuilding project, but they struggled with one issue they had. There was this magnificent, large statue of Christ with his arms outstretched. And there was an inscription on the base of the statue, "Come unto Me". And it has arms outstretched. The statue was in perfect condition, except the bombs and the falling rafters and timbers had lopped off both hands. And so, there was much consternation and much struggle in trying to get an artist and what are we gonna do? How do we shape the hands? How's this gonna work out? And I'll spare you the details, but they met with difficulty after difficulty after difficulty in getting this done. Finally, they had a big confab and a whole actually series of meetings and discussions and they came up with the idea: 'No, we're not gonna change it. We're gonna leave that statue with the arms of Christ outstretched and the hands lopped off. We're gonna change the inscription from "Come unto Me", to "Christ has no hands but ours". Isn't that great? And that is the point of this passage of scripture. It's a perfect illustration for it because you and I have been bought with a price. We have come to Christ. He's led us to surrender our body, our mind, our soul, our thinking, our conduct, our flesh, our will to Almighty God in the salvation relationship. He's told us to continually do that, but it's for a cause. You've been saved for a



purpose, to live for the glory of God, to walk through all those good works, Ephesians 2:10, that God has ordained for us to walk in before us and a critical key part of that is using your spiritual giftedness in service to Christ. That's the way He's ordained it to happen. We are to be His hands, we are to be His feet, we are to be His mouth, we are to be His eyes going through this earth and advancing the gospel. So, and that is the point, by the way, of Romans 12:3-6.

It starts with worship, but it always results and produces service. And I wanted to underscore a couple of things about that so that you get this passage in context. We always start out as believers in Christ, the start, like I said (Romans 12:1-2, that's the start), it's always total, total unity in terms of the message, the gospel of Christ, and total unity in terms of how we're saved. We all come into the family of God the same way, grace through faith, Romans 12:1-2, presenting our all to God in repentant faith and belief and entrustment to the sovereign lordship of Christ. Everybody, me, you, everybody, comes in and totally unified in that way. And there's only one message. It's the pure gospel of Jesus Christ is our one constant message, total unity on that. However, when it comes to service, it's total diversity. It is complete diversity. And that's what he wants to get across here. Look what he says in verse three. ***For through the grace***, excuse me, ***given to me I say to every man individually among you***, he's talking in an individual sense, ***not to think more highly of himself***, again, an individual sense ***than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment as God has allotted to each***, what, ***a measure of faith***. There's a difference there. He's already underscoring the distinctions. In verse five, he says, ***so we who are many are one body in Christ and***, look, ***individually members of one another***. He's emphasizing this individualness, this differences, if you will. The primary focus of these verses is to demonstrate to us so that we all enter, if you will, the place of usefulness in the same manner, with the same gospel



message, with total self-sacrifice. There's complete uniformity in that, but there's great, great, great diversity when it comes to our service and our ministry.

I was thinking when I, we not only don't look alike, we, there's no two people, I mean, I guess there's identical twins, so don't go crazy on me. You know what I mean. But there's no two people that look alike. I don't look like Bob, thank goodness he doesn't look like Susan. Susan doesn't look like Teri, nobody looks like Mark. We all look different. And guess what? We all serve the Lord in different ways. You say, well, no, no, you know, there's a gift of teaching, there's a gift. No, there is a gift of teaching, but no one exercises it identically the way another person does. The classic example on that to me is, tell a tale of myself, is with my brother-in-law, Reese. He loves the preaching of John Stott. I love reading John Stott's books, great comment. I listen to sermons by John Stott and I'm snoring in 30 seconds. He bores me to tears. Well, now that's not John Stott's fault. That's probably my fault. But the point is different people minister in different ways. You know, R.C. Sproul, there's only one R.C. Sproul ever lived, only one that ever will live. There's only one John MacArthur and only one ever will live. There's only one Spurgeon. There's only one Jonathan Edwards. There's only one Alistair Begg, pick somebody. There's only one Charles Swindoll. But get this, here's the point, there's only one you. There's only one you. And time I know will get away from me. Make sure you get this. You were saved and given at least one spiritual gift. We'll explain that when we get there. And it is to be used. You are to use it for the glory of God. And He gave it to you. And He gave it to you with a purpose. And we're gonna see, that's why I had Ben read a part of 1 Corinthians 12. We're gonna see some later verses in 1 Corinthians 12, probably next week now. But that talk about, it gives Him pleasure. And God doesn't waste things. And to the extent you've been given a gift and you don't use it in some way in service to the body of Christ and outside the body of Christ as He might, depending upon what the gift is, literally



you're in sin. You're not walking in holiness. You're not fulfilling Romans 12:1-2. You're not presenting your body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. And I know all sorts of bells are going off in various ways with, what is my spiritual gift? And how do I know what my spiritual gift is? And how am I using it? And do you mean that we all like to stand up and teach the Bible? No, that may not be your gift. And by the way, the gift of teaching itself. Well, don't go there, John, okay. But I wanted you to see, it's not mystical. This is not this, your spiritual service of worship presents your mind, your body. It's not some mystical or monkish or monastic or some sort of... this is very, very practical stuff. It's as practical as it can be. And by the way, service to God is never going, your service, whatever it might be, to Almighty God, whatever you do, if it doesn't come and flow from a heart that is totally humbly committed to Him moment by moment and doing it, your service is not gonna result in any lasting blessing for you. By the same token, you can have a spiritual gift which is not gonna be any blessing to you if you don't use it, all right. Any meaningful ministry that is blessed by God is driven by a heart that is living out Romans 12:1-2. That's what I'm trying to say.

And there's always two extremes. There's people who can be very, very busy doing, quote, church stuff, and it's not effective. I'm not saying that people can't be blessed by it, but that individual is not gonna get a blessing from an eternal standpoint in any way, shape, or form if it's not being produced from a heart that is truly humbly doing it because it flows out of a worship to God. By the same token, if I see, if I see, if people or you see somebody who literally doesn't exercise any giftedness at all to anybody at any time in the body of Christ, you can write it down that that individual most likely is not born again. Or if they are born again, they are not living out Romans 12:1-2 and getting the blessing that they might have.

This, you know what all this is? This is a subset of the whole concept that James tells us. Faith without works is dead. You know, what are they all, the famous, quote, "Faith alone saves, but



the faith that saves is not alone.” That if you're truly born again, there's gonna be some fruit in your life. Well, the underlying subset of that is if you're truly born again, you've been given a spiritual gift and you're not gonna be blessed if you're not exercising it. And quite frankly, if you're genuinely following out Romans 12:1-2, you're gonna have a passion where you want to exercise it.

I wanna try to say this and let me just, well, one pastor told the story this way. I think it was MacArthur, but it might not have, it could have been Swindoll, I can't remember. But he said he got a letter one day from a person in their church and said, I need to meet with you, pray with you, and be counseled by you immediately. I'm in trouble, this guy said in his letter. He says, I've driven my wife away because I taught her by example to be a Christian on Sunday and a non-believer through the rest of the week. And our marriage now is in shambles. And so, when I said, well, let's read the scriptures together and pray, she has simply assumed it's just another facade. It's another phony game because I've been one way on Sundays, and I've lived a totally different way through the week. Such a life obviously is not worshiping God. And please know, I'm not saying that a carnal life can't result in fruit for God. My father-in-law's great example. He says, John, you've heard me say this before, you can put a drunk on the street corner and have him stand there day and night reading the Gospel of John to a zillion people walking by on a New York City street. And over a period of time, somebody will hear the word of God and God will have some effect with it. But the drunk doesn't get blessed for the lifestyle he's leading. It's just that God choose to bless his word. Classic example I can think of, although he came to know Christ later. Well, my dad was laying in a cancer clinic at MD Anderson Hospital and my wife, Teri, was ministering to him day in, day out. This was back in 1983. They click on the TV and who would be on TV? Of all, Jimmy Swaggart, of all people. And we know the hypocritical lifestyle and life he was leading at the time. But his



sharing the truth of the word of God gave my wife, Teri, an opportunity to talk to my dad about things from the word of God. And then later on, I got involved in the act right before he died and reading him the scriptures and so forth. The bottom line is, God used a lot of things to bring about fruit, but it wasn't any blessing for Jimmy Swaggart, if you will.

Here's another example. I remember the truelife account. I got in trouble for saying the denomination when I was in the pulpit at Scottsdale Bible Church. I didn't get in trouble by the church. I got in trouble by a lady who visited the church for the very first time, sad to say. And I mentioned the fact that this took place in a denomination I shouldn't mention, but it was a Lutheran church. She happened to be a lady bishop from this Lutheran denomination, visiting SBC for the very first time when I used this example, but all in the hand of timing of God. I meant, I didn't mean it in a mean way. In any event, what was that example? Oh yeah, so there's a guy, literally, sitting in the choir loft of a Lutheran church, not here in the valley, it was somewhere else, I think it was in Pennsylvania. He's sitting in the choir loft, and they're going through a communion service, and the pastor is doing the elements, and somewhere along the line, and whatever was shared from the scripture and so forth, this guy's sitting up in the choir loft... the gospel clicks on. He says, "I've never repented of my sins. I've never humbled myself and thrown myself on the mercy of the cross of Christ, or whatever." He says, he bows his head and prays to receive Christ. He gets converted, sitting in the choir loft. Well, after the service is over, they're back and taking off their robes and everything, and he's on fire, saying, "The light clicked on. I get it, I'm one of you. I'm so excited!", and they're looking at him like he's got five heads. "No, I mean, I'm born again. I get it now. I know Christ is my personal Lord and Savior", and these other choir members are looking at him like he's got leprosy or something, and he goes in and sees the pastor the next day, and says, "I actually came to know Christ!", and the pastor had no clue what he was talking about. The point is, he



literally, God chose to bless his word, even though the people sharing it, were not submitting their hearts in humble worship to God and on and on and on. I think you get the example.

The classic one, most recently, is Steve Lawson. Here's a guy who, for at least the last five years or so, has been totally living in sin while going around preaching. Now, he has forfeited eternal rewards, and he has lost that reciprocal blessing, but people who have come to know Christ, people who've grown in their walk as a result of what he shared and what he preached and what he... People have called me 10 or 12 times now in the last year, I guess, eight months, saying, hey, they're scrubbing all of Lawson's sermons and stuff off of the Ligonier website and off of the, oh, Steve, the Shepherds Conference and the other websites. Should we read his material? Should we listen to his sermons? And my response to that is, look, they're taking those off that website because of the conduct and the lifestyle. They don't wanna be in a position of throwing a mantle of imprimatur and approval on what this man is presently doing. But in terms of the content of what he said about the Word of God and what he said in those particular sermons, that is still truth, and truth is truth, and God will honor truth. And to the extent it enables you to learn more about the Scriptures and more about the Word of God and expanding your knowledge and feeding your mind and soul so that you can be more and more conformed to the image of Christ, absolutely read the books and all of that other stuff. That's not the, the point is: the truth is more powerful than our own personal human limitations.

Okay, so why are you getting into all of this? Because even though that's true, I remember when I first became a new believer in Christ, and it was in the mid-70s, and it was a big push, maybe the push is still on, it should be... Well, what's your spiritual gift? Do you know what your spiritual gift is? Everybody who comes to Christ is given at least one spiritual gift. What's your spiritual gift? Well, I don't know, how do I figure it out? Well, pray about it. And then



there was this 10 basic steps to Christian maturity deal that Campus Crusade put out, and it was a Sunday school class in this little Southern Baptist church where I was initially going to, and a dentist who's long gone to be with the Lord by the name of Ralph Walz was teaching each one of those sessions. He was a tremendous teacher, by the way. And there was one session on discovering your spiritual gift. I remember working through all of that. But there's one thing, I don't know if it was left out of the booklet, and I just missed it, but I know one thing. It wasn't emphasized like it should be. And what's that? I love what this one commentator said: *You will never know your spiritual gift, or certainly never know its potential, until you have lived out Romans 12:1-2. If you are not, this is a quote, to the point of total dedication, whatever you're doing in terms of function and whatever you're doing in terms of service, it's not revealing to you the full definition or potential of your gift.* Why, he says? *Because you're not operating at the level of total commitment.* That is an important truth. What's he saying? Until you present your body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God as your spiritual service of worship, until you're all in and say, "Jesus, I will do whatever it is you tell me to do", the light and the depth, I should say, I won't say the light doesn't click on, but the depth of your knowledge of what God would have you do is being blunted, is being thwarted. Whether it's Steve Lawson or me, with sin in my own heart, with pride, I can stand behind this pulpit and just wanna be, "Oh, I just wanna be thought so good of by all those people. I want them to think I'm the man." I can stand up with that kind of pride in my heart and preach a sermon, and God may bless his word in some respect in your life, but not the way he could if I was a pure vessel at that point in time. You know what it does? I won't sense God's good pleasure. It won't confirm my giftedness, my gift of teaching and preaching, and I also lose eternal rewards. Don't be confused by the fact that God honors His word. If the man's heart is wrong, it is not gonna have the impact that it ordinarily would have. Here, the thing I



keep thinking, I'm way off on my notes, but it doesn't matter. The thing I think of is Jonathan Edwards. People do not appreciate, I don't appreciate really fully, what Jonathan Edwards, who he was. Jonathan Edwards, we always say, because it's true, probably the greatest theological mind that was ever born on this side of the Atlantic and so forth. True, but Jonathan Edwards was used in a mighty way by God for a whole different reason. He, by the way, he's a man who literally, he changed the United States of America. His preaching in the early colonial era changed this country. He was profound and he was profoundly powerful. His sermons were powerful. They shaped the way the conscience of the Enlightenment movement and the colonists of the time. It was unbelievable. He would read his sermons, get this, in a monotone voice because he was afraid that the people might be swayed by emotions to come to Christ and they wouldn't think through the truth of what he was saying. He'd have his head down, reading monotone what he had written. And yet history records how people would break out screaming and wailing halfway through and fall on their knees. So, I'm hearing this as a new Christian and reading these biographies as a new Christian. And so I got the idea, man, he's the guy who has that sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. So, I gotta read that sermon. How many of you have actually gone and read that sermon? Oh, I'm impressed with it. I had that many hands, good for you. The thing that struck me, if you were the same way, I read that sermon and I thought to myself, okay, but this caused people to feel like the ground was shaking? This caused people to fear hell because of their sins? This caused people to fall on their knees and scream out in repentance? I mean, no offense, but give me a break. What is it? And this is why we're talking about Romans 12:1-2. I'll tell you what it is. Jonathan Edwards was a man just like you and me. Jonathan Edwards has the same sinful foibles and so forth, just like you and me. But at some point in time as a very young man, Jonathan Edwards took Romans 12:1-2 seriously. And the fruit of his ministry was not only



because he shared the truth of the word of God. The power in his ministry was the fact that God worked through him because he was such a pure vessel, because he had that total, total heart commitment and worship to God before he did anything. He's the guy, if you may recall, who wrote down 70 what he called "resolves", 70 resolutions. He, it's amazing. By the way, young people should be very encouraged. He wrote these down when he was 17, his resolutions. By the way, you should be encouraged in another respect as well. We talk about the youth when you are young, but I've got a couple of World War II memorabilia at home that were taken off some dead soldiers in World War II by some relatives of mine fighting in Europe when they were 19. So, when you're 17, 18, 19 years old in God's economy, you're a woman, you're a man, you're there. And so, Jonathan Edwards writes down what he called his resolves. If I take heart, I'm not gonna read all 70 of them today. But what was it about the man that made the difference? Here's what he wrote. *Resolved: to live with all my might while I do live.* In other words, live to the fullest while I'm alive. *Resolved: never to lose one moment of time to improve it in the most profitable way I can.* *Resolved: never to do anything, get this, never to do anything which I should despise or think ill of in another.* *Resolved: never to do anything out of revenge.* And this one really struck me. *Resolved: never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.* The reason why, and I mean no disrespect, but I could read what I thought was a pretty boring sermon in many respects from Jonathan Edwards is because yes, it had the truth. It had the truth of the word of God. It was there. Yes, he was reading it in a monotone, but God chose to use it because as best as a fallen, depraved sinner could do it at the time, Jonathan Edwards was presenting his body as a living sacrifice, his mind, his soul, his will, his emotions, and everything in the service of God and was exercising the spiritual gift that he knew God had given him for the glory of God. So, the potency and the impact of his ministry was just that powerful and it makes a huge difference.



If we were in an Anglican church right now over in London, let's say, at a post communion service, after the communion in the typical Anglican liturgy, the congregation stands up altogether and they recite: *And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice unto thee.* And that's the distinction, not for the Anglican church. That's the distinction in the individual's life. You read all the books, all the biographies, and I suggest that you do, of the great saints of the past and they were fallen, failing human beings just like you and me. And the reason why their ministries and their service of their spiritual gifts, and by the way, I'm talking about pastors and spiritual, but don't get sidetracked. Every believer in this room has at least one spiritual gift to be exercised. The principle applies to all of us. That spiritual giftedness that you have, it'll have the impact and the power that God wants it to have if you are living in accordance with Romans 12:1-2. That's why he sets it up and then transitions into ministry and service and giftedness after sharing those principles.

By the way, some of you are saying, well, how many spiritual gifts are they and how I know if I have a spiritual gift and I said we'd touch upon that. There's a listing of spiritual gifts later on in this chapter, Romans here, chapter 12:6-8, there's a listing in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, which Ben read for us. There's a further listing later on in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30, and there's sort of a repeat and a modified listing of a few of them in Ephesians 4:11. And people always say to me, was it exhaustive? Is that all the spiritual gifts? No, I don't think it's exhausting. I think those are representative, excuse me, samples of various spiritual gifts. And do you only get one or do you get others? I think some people get more than one. I think some just get a one. And it just depends on the time. But everybody gets one and everybody needs to be using it.



And I'll just use myself as an example because it's easy to beat up me. I can't offend anybody but me. When I first became a Christian, I thought I had the gift of exhortation or encouragement because actually I'm a person who, as you've heard me say many times over, I could run 100 yards on 40 tons of criticism. I could run a marathon on four ounces of encouragement. I'm just encouragement. Chuck Swindoll, as a matter of fact, decided to base his whole ministry, he's the same way. He based his whole ministry on encouragement, trying to be an encourager. But I thought that that maybe was my spiritual gift. But as I matriculated along in my Christian walk, as Romans 12:1-2 was explained to me, and the more and more I strive to try to say, "Look, God, I don't know what my giftedness is. I just want to do what you want me to do. I wanna present my body, a living sacrifice to You." Over time, it became obvious to me and I had some confirmation in this that it was the gift of teaching. Teaching, preaching, really. Now, I may be an encourager and an exhorter as opposed to just a flame-throwing hammer pounder through my preaching because of that, but that's the way it was. Now, people always say to me, well, John, you know, and by the way, watching other spiritual gifts used, the gift of mercy, my wife has a gift of mercy. I can see Teri Politan sit and listen, listen, listen, listen, listen to people pouring out their heart and problems. And now, I listen to people tell me problems all day long, but I don't listen the way she listens. I'm sitting there, my mind's ticking on, okay, legally, what can we do? Oh, what Bible verse applied? That's not what Teri's doing. She's got to give the mercy. You know what she's doing? She's entering in to the feeling of that individual. She's dialed in to where they are. That's her giftedness. Now, I will tell you something. Whether it's to 10,000 people over the pulpit at Scottsdale Bible Church, whether it's to 600-person Sunday school class at Scottsdale Bible Church, whether it's a 12-person home fellowship group in our home, whether it's to you, dear souls, 150-200 hundred people over this pulpit, whether it's in a conversation one-on-one with a friend, I



don't care what it is, there's something that's, I have that passion that I want to talk about some aspect of God's word if it comes up. And it obviously causes my wife at times to say, John, why don't you slap a T on it and let Carter say something? Why don't you shut up for a minute and let Scott say something? And I get it. I don't want to be overbearing bore, but that's just sort of that passion. You could tell Teri all day long, quit doing that. It's a painful gift in many ways. Carry burdens around. You might as well be telling a leopard to change its spots. Not gonna happen. It's the same way with you.

Well, people say, you know what? I'm really dedicated to the Lord, but right now I'm busy. Or I'm busy with my work. I'm busy raising a family. I'm busy shopping. I'm busy hobbying. I'm busy recreating. I'm busy vacationing. I'm busy, busy, busy, busy, busy. He's got big shoulders. I know he can take it. I thought of you, Mike Fink. Mike Fink no longer carries the title elder, the formal title "elder". Mike Fink is one of our elders. Just like many other men in this church who are striving to live out the mandates of 1 Timothy 3, whether you have a formal title as elder or not. But there came a point in time when he said, "You know what? The seasons of life, and what's going on, and the church maintenance and the finances and the meetings and this and that and the other with what I'm dealing with right now, I need to transition and not have that formal title." But guess what? You can tell he's still dealing with the security team. He's still interacting with them. He's using his spiritual giftedness to still minister to what? You know why? Because if you're presenting your body in worship to Almighty God, you can't turn that off. That's a part of who you are. That's a part of the way you're created in Christ. You, Joan, I thought of immediately. Here's a woman who has to get to church on a walker. And you know what she's doing? She's got her ministry with the blankets. She's got her ministry with her widow's group. She's got her ministry with other people. She's got her ministry with prayer. It may come in different seasons of life. She doesn't have the physical



ability. She can't do what she did necessarily before. But good grief, she's presenting her body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, and she's exercising her spiritual gift. And you couldn't beat Joan right out of this church or beat her away from that ministry with a stick. You could take her, walker away from it. She'd crawl to do those blankets and that other stuff. Am I right? Sure, why? Because Joan's so wonderful, because Mike's so wonderful, because John and Teri are so wonderful? No, because Almighty God promises to continue to do that work and to bless you to confirm your giftedness, to confirm your giftedness, to confirm your service. If you will do that, if you'll humbly present your body, your mind, your soul, your will to God. That's how you find out, or at least be confirmed, in what your spiritual gift is and the uniqueness of it. And by the way, nobody can do it the way Joan does. Nobody can do it the way Mike does. Nobody can do the way Bob exercises his gift. I can't be John MacArthur. I wish I could. Nobody's gonna be R.C. Sproul. Nobody's gonna be Jonathan Edwards. There's people who will leave this church because they don't like the way I present the word of God. Then they'll go to, as long as they go to another solid Bible believing church, praise God. You know why? Everybody doesn't exercise the same spiritual gift in the same way. As a matter of fact, nobody does it quite alike. Everybody's different and everybody's unique and it's okay. The point is, are you exercising it?

There is a whole lot more that I had to say about this, and I sure wish I had time to do it. So, I guess you'll all just have to come back next week. But as Brian comes up to lead us into closing him, I did wanna share one personal story from our friend John MacArthur. Because he, how many times have I listened to one of his sermons or read one of his sermons and gone to myself, "Oy vey! I have read that passage of scripture 50 times, never saw in that what he saw." And the tendency is to think, well, he just must be some stained-glass saint. Well, I don't know him super well, but I know him enough personally to know and enough family members



to know he's a great guy, strives to live in holiness, but he's no stained-glass saint. And by his own admission, he said this: *You think I've got some special input from heaven? Let me tell you, this is MacArthur. I'm actually reading what he wrote. I used to ask myself when I was in seminary, how could I just get out of seminary, let alone ever spend my life teaching the word of God, writing books and writing commentaries. And when I came to Grace Church, I came with fear and trepidation wondering how could I keep sermons going? And I figured that I'd surely run out of things. It was difficult for me going through seminary because I would second guess my own capabilities, he says. But as I began to see God wanting more and more of my life, and as I began to let go of things in my life and totally give over my life to Him, then the expansion of the capability that the spirit of God gave to me was ever increasing, he goes on. And I want you to know that it isn't that I have some great intellectual capability. It isn't that I'm some kind of unique creature that doesn't have all the same factors and foibles that you do. It is simply the fact that, and this is the part that blessed me, once you make the commitment to be everything God wants you to be, and once you say, 'I'll do whatever it costs', then you begin to see an expanding capability that the spirit of God reveals in your life. And now you begin to see your gift for what it really is. I think a lot of folks have trouble trying to figure out what their gift and ministry is because they've never gone through Romans 12:1- 2. And because of that, they're struggling with a very limited amount of data to deal with. You start by dedication of self, and then you go to service.* That is a powerful, powerful statement from the Charles Spurgeon, in my opinion, of our lifetime. There is much more on Romans 12:1-2. I apologize for some of my digressions and stories, but I hope it was enough of a whetting of your appetite that when we really start dissecting three, four, five, and six in the rest of this chapter, you'll have it in a proper context.



Let me close us in prayer, and then I know Brian's gonna lead us in a hymn. Father, thank You for this time and Your word and the patience of our congregation. We prayed at the outset for recall, and Jim Claypool and the other elders prayed especially before the service that if You laid anything on my heart, that it would be of You. Lord, You took me down some tributaries, and hopefully they weren't dead end rabbit trails, but were things that You wanted at least one person here to hear. May You be pleased by our time in Your scriptures. May all of us, all of us, speaker and listeners alike, be even more convicted of moment by moment presenting our bodies, our spirits, our minds, our emotions, our will, our actions, the passions of the flesh, all of it to You for Your glory, and that You will give us that ability to use the giftedness You've emplaced in our souls to minister to others as You see fit. We pray all this in the matchless name again of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, our Christ. Amen and amen.