



## Your Unique Ministry Spiritual Gifts Part 5, 2025

March 23, 2025

Romans 12:1-8

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(1:08:46)

Well, I hope you still have, every one of you, a Bible in your hands. And if you haven't already, I'd ask you to please open it to the book of Romans chapter 12. Romans chapter 12. And you just follow along as I read again from the New American Standard translation from this portion of God's word that we have been looking at for several weeks. And I'm just gonna read again to refresh it again upon your minds in the short time we have this morning, the first eight verses. Romans 12, starting at verse one. ***I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me, 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, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. 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 one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.***

Now in reading that passage, we've arrived, as we've said a couple of times now, at a very key point in the book of Romans. It's a turning point where doctrine turns to duty, with orthodoxy



turns to orthopraxy, where theology turns into practice, into actual life living. And he says, look, because of 11 chapters of the mercies of God, in response to that, what are you to do? The very first thing you do is what? You present your body. And again, over and over again, we keep saying it's talking about what? It's talking about your spirit. By implication, it means your spirit. Your physical desires and wants, et cetera, your body, your fleshly passions, if you will. Your mind, what you think, and what your thinking causes you to do in terms of decision making. Your will, you turn it all (soul, body, mind, and will), you present all of it as a living sacrifice to Almighty God. And then what do you do? You continue in that pattern, and you're more and more molded to Christ because you are, instead of being conformed into the world's mold, you are transformed by the renewing of your mind (As a man thinks in his heart, so is he), by the constant renewing of your mind from the word of God so that you can live this out.

And so, it's not a new thought, by the way. One of the things I wanted to share with you on that. Think about it. Jesus called for that exact same thing. Luke 14:27. Except a man, pick up his cross; a ministry of death. That's a way of saying until you die to yourself, how dead do you have to die to yourself? Completely. Until you die to self, you cannot be my disciple. In another passage in Luke 14, actually Luke 14, the verse before 27, verse 26, he says if a man does not turn his back, if you will, on father and mother and brother and sister, he cannot be my disciple. He's not worthy to be my disciple. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:31, to the Corinthian church, I die daily. Why? Because we're a living sacrifice and we have a tendency to crawl off the altar. We have a tendency to fall back because of the fallen flesh we live in and fall back into old ways of thinking and old ways of living. Sin, in other words. But the starting point is right there in Romans 12:1&2. And I was thinking about this. Hopefully, the starting point becomes you're sitting in a worship service, you're sitting in a Bible study, you're talking to a friend and somebody shares with you the principles of Romans 12:1&2, and the Spirit of



God causes you to say, "Yes, I get it, that's right, I'm all in for God." But a lot of times, sad to say, it doesn't happen that way. One commentator pointed out that he had to be walking with Christ five, six, seven years, be about 18 years of age, thrown from a moving car and slide 100 yards down a highway, ripping all the skin off of his back, almost taking his life before he thought, "I better get serious about giving my life to God." He said, "before I crawled off that highway and ended up spending three months in a bed recovering, I made the decision right then and there, my life just got spared, I can't play around with the things of God anymore, I'm all in for God. I am tired of trying to do it my way. I'm tired of having one foot in heaven and one foot in hell, so to speak. I'm tired of being a wishy washy, lukewarm... I claim to be a believer in Christ, God will make the decision for me from here on out, I'm all in." And that is exactly where Romans 12:1&2 says, every one of us need to be. Have you ever come to that point in your life? I did and it wasn't through a tragedy, I'd walk with the Lord five or six years and then I was about 29 years of age, been a believer about four or five years and ultimately got to a point where I was tired of, if you will, the spiritual lukewarmness; the on again, off again. Got to a point where I was just tired of 'cruising', and I realized this is for real. And I turn to you young people, and I turn to you older people. Are you tired of cruising? The word of God says, do it now. It's absolutely a requirement, it is a command, it is exactly what we're called upon to do. It is exactly living out the first article of the Westminster Confession of Faith. What is the chief end of man? What's the goal, what's the purpose of your entire life? It's to live to the glory of God, to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. And let me just say it again, he goes on through here and starts talking about spiritual giftedness and you will never experience the full pleasure of Almighty God, you will never live your life fully to the glory of God, until you understand at least a smattering of what your spiritual giftedness is and you are all in and using that as God has ordained for the glory of God.



These first eight verses we've been following along, a little outline, it starts out with what? **The right sacrifice**, you're all. And it leads to what, the **right attitude**, verse three, sound judgment, not thinking of yourself more highly than you should, but at the same time, not thinking less of yourself than you should. It's sort of a spiritual paradox. You give your all to God and realize you're nothing and He's everything and then immediately you turn around but because He has chosen to give you a special giftedness which is totally unique, (Remember, we're all spiritual snowflakes, not one of us is exactly alike. 1 Corinthians 12:7). He gave gifts individually, remember the word individually, *idios*? We get the word 'idiot' from it. 'Totally unique' is what it means in the Greek. There's no human being on the planet that knows Christ, and never has been, never will be, that is exactly uniquely gifted to live for the glory of God and to use a gift to edify the body of Christ, like you. So, while we're nothing, in Christ we're everything. And we live in sort of that divine paradox. But the attitude is humility, and that humility is easy to have when you give your entire life away to God. You got nothing to hold back and to be proud of, and anything that happens, and anything He chooses to do through you will be His doing it, not yours, to His glory. And so, then in verses 4&5, after seeing the right sacrifice and seeing the right attitude to have with that sacrifice, we get to verse 4&5 and we see what **the right relationship** is, and I've already underscored it. We're a part of the body, we're a part of the body of Christ, Paul loved that metaphor; A foot is not a hand, a hand is not an eye, an eye is not a nose, a nose is not a mouth, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. We're all unique, we're all different, but in our diversity, there's a unity. We're all part of a grand whole called the body of Christ. And God has uniquely equipped each one of us such that the body does not function as perfectly and as glorious to God as it should if any part is not "playing its role". You can be the strongest soldier imaginable, you can be the most talented marathon runner there is, you can be the strongest man or woman at the



Boston Marathon and absolutely have victory in your hand. You get one pebble in your shoe that starts bothering you and it's going to throw you off over that 26 miles and you are not going to be as effective as you can be. And so, Paul says we're in a right relationship and it's a relationship of service, a ministry of service, and we do it by using our spiritual gifts.

Now, he lists seven spiritual gifts that we read through there. What are they? Well, they're prophecy, let me get my list out here. They're prophecy and serving, service. The third one he lists there in verses six, seven, eight is teaching, so it's **prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy**. And you say, well, is that all the gifts there are? These are gifts, but actually they're more categories of gifts, if you will. They are an overarching category of gift in which all the spiritual gifts fall into. And every believer, by the way, is called to ministry. The concept that you are a believer in Jesus Christ and you do not minister to others is totally foreign to the word of God. Now, I'm not saying that your ministry has to be within the confines or the structure of a local church. I think everybody should be a member of a local church, and there's a lot of reasons for that. We'll talk about it another time. But in terms of using your giftedness, whether it's actually in the confines of a local church or in some other venue and say, you as a believer in Christ are to me ministering, using that gift. I'll just give an example. Dear friend, the late Wedge Lutz, one of our former elders, has gone to be with the Lord. He, whatever his spiritual gift was, a part of it, a part of his giftedness was mercy and a compassion because he spent tons of time at the local jails and the lockups in a prison ministry, and he had a compassionate heart for people who were down and out and had financial or legal or other types of struggles like that. Now, that was a giftedness that, for the most part, he utilized away from the physical locale and outside of the local church body, if you will, but nonetheless, ministry nonetheless. And so these are broad categories, if you will. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, Paul says, there are varieties of gifts, but one Spirit. There's



varieties of ministries, but one Lord. Varieties of effects, varieties of fruit. In other words, he's saying, look, there's no such thing as a gift of teaching that everybody has the same gift of teaching. Everybody has the same gift of preaching. They're not carbon cookie cutter copies of one another. As a matter of fact, no two are alike. And I've used that example over and over again of an artist's palette where he may take a little bit of this color and a little bit of that color, a little bit, and mix them together in various shades and to various degrees.

But in addition to that, there's more to it than that. Just to show you what one commentator says to give a concept of how unique and different the gifts are and how they work together, he says, *Within the area of prophesying, serving, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading, showing mercy, the ones we've just read, there are multiplicities of possible manifestations, the variety of gift areas, the degree of giftedness, the measure of faith that is poured out* (at the end of verse three, it says you have a measure of faith) *the amount of faith that is poured out on the individual has to all be taken into consideration*, he says. He goes on and says, *God mixes these various colors on the palette of your life. Add to that the varying amounts of Bible knowledge from individual to individual, varying amounts of skill and preparation, varying amounts of wisdom and experience, diverse personality, diverse opportunity. And when you get it all mixed together, every Christian comes out unique so that every one of us stands alone in the body of Christ with a function that no one else can fill except for us. And should we not fill it, the rewards at the end of time will be not what they could be if we'd fulfill that calling.*

We don't want to oversimplify the gifts. There's problems that result from that. I started to touch on them last week, and I'm gonna give you a few of those problems, actually. Well, you know, well, Bob's got a gift of teaching, but you know what, if Bob doesn't exercise his gift of teaching, well, there's a lot of people with a gift of teaching, we'll just go get a Bill and his gift of teaching, and we'll just slam him in there. That is a horrible way to think. Actually, you



create a problem, and the problem is what I actually just mentioned. The thought process that, well, if I don't exercise my gift, somebody else will, that is a wrong way to think. We're giving people an excuse not to use their giftedness by doing that. People must be aware, and I'm underscoring it again: You, if you're a genuine believer in Christ, are equipped in a manner that no other person is. Another problem, if you oversimplify the gifts, is confusion. I had this confusion early on in my Christian life, then grew and understood more, and it was explained to me, and I understood it. But I still run across older believers and younger believers saying, you know, this pastor gave a sermon one time on spiritual gifts, or led a seminar on spiritual gifts, or I went to this seminar, and I just can't figure out, John, what my spiritual gift is, I'm really struggling, I don't know what it is. And I have to repeat over and over and over again, don't worry about it. Don't worry about it. Follow those nine steps that we talked about, and then go serve. Your spiritual gift usually resists a label. Your spiritual gift is you. Your spiritual gift is Debbie. Your spiritual gift is PJ, it's you. There is no one else like you, and yes, you'll come to know certain things that God uses you to do, and you sense God's good pleasure in doing them, and so forth. I struggle, is it really the gift of preaching, or was it really the gift of teaching, or do I have the gift of exhortation, or was it really the gift of encouragement? It's a little bit of all of those, in whatever degree that God chooses to use it. There's so many other things that we can say about that, but I wanna jump in where we left off last time on prophecy. This gift of prophecy, and one of the reasons why we talked about it is that *prophēteia* is the word, and it can mean to tell forth the future, and many times, it did mean to tell the future. It was a sign gift, like tongues and healings. If you could predict the future, it obviously confirmed that you were God's messenger. That gift is not used in that manner in this day and age, but an aspect of prophecy still is, because in addition to foretelling the future, there's forthtelling the truth. We would call it preaching, proclaiming. It's the gift, it means to publicly



stand, it means to stand face to face before men. The best definition of it, actually, is in, I think it was 1 Corinthians 14:3 is what I gave you last time. It says, he who prophesies speaks unto men. It is to publicly proclaim God's truth. It differs from the gift of teaching in that all preaching, all public proclamation of God's truth contains an element of teaching, but all teaching doesn't necessarily talk about public proclamation of the word of God. Teaching carries with it the idea of a systemization, and sometimes a period of time, and unfolding and an explaining and an application and a mentoring and a tutoring aspect of it. It may take place publicly before a group of people, but in terms of a preaching mode over a pulpit, or it may take place publicly, teaching in a Sunday school class, or in a seminary class, or in a home fellowship, or a Bible study, or teaching could take place one-on-one, talking to somebody over a picnic table and explaining or expounding some aspect of the word of God. So he says, prophecy, prophecy foretelling the truth.

Now, something came up that Brian raised after the service last week and then sent me a link to it. There's a gentleman named Tom Wadsworth, and I don't know much about him other than the few little things I looked up, but his big thing is that preaching shouldn't be happening in the church today. That preaching really didn't go on in congregations in New Testament times and so forth, and teaching is okay, but standing up and preaching, if you will, proclaiming God's truth is not what should go on. If you hear that, if you hear people that espouse that, it's almost like a brethren movement, approach to things where somebody just sort of stands up and has a word of knowledge and just expounds and so forth, and there's more to it than that. Let me just say that I went into it deeper than I thought I was gonna do, Brian, and he's dead wrong, just so you know. 61 times in the, the aspect of the word *prophēteia* for prophesying, the word *kērussō* (G2784), *kērussō*, in the Greek is used, and it means to be a herald, to publicly proclaim. That word is used 61 times in the New Testament



for standing up and proclaiming, heralding God's truth to people, and it's totally different than the word *didaskō* (G1321), which is the Greek word that means teaching. So, and there's, you know, there's many, many passages throughout that I wrote down on this list, and in time, I don't think it's important to spend that much time on it. I just thought it was important because Brian was aware of it. I was really not aware of this guy, and you may hear it at some point in time, and trust me, he's incorrect.

And just to give you a few historical examples, some might say, well, I believe that preaching still goes on today, but it shouldn't be to believers. It should be to just people outside the church. Well, first of all, that'd be more the gift of evangelism than prophesying, and I don't know how much justification you all need, but let me just give you a few names. Justin Martyr, Justin Martyr lived in about 150 A.D. He gave an account in his own writings of the weekly worship services of Christians when they met together, and the prominence was given to preaching and to proclaiming God's truth. Justin Martyr wrote this, quote, *and on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the writings of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read. And as long as time permits, then when the reader has ceased, I love this, the president verbally instructs...* (I don't know why they chose the word president, but apparently they did. The president, I think it's a word that really means 'the one who presides over') *...the president verbally instructs and exhorts the people in the imitation of these good things by proclaiming the truth they have heard.* Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea, another one of the early church fathers, he talks about preaching established the churches and the preaching that went on in churches once they were established. Hugh Latimer, you may have heard of Hugh Latimer, lived in the 1400s, the famous Latimer and Ridley, a martyr, he and Nicholas Ridley burned at the stake for their faith and the gospel of Christ. And one of the things that Latimer was known for was his



preaching in the church to believers. In one of his greatest sermons, in my opinion, that he ever gave, he turned to his congregation and he said, do you know who the greatest preacher in all of England is? The greatest preacher in all of England. You know his name. You're very familiar with it. Latimer hesitated and everybody wondered what name is he gonna name? Who's the greatest preacher in all of England? He says, the devil, Satan. He's always at his plow. He's always home. He's always in his pulpit. He never takes a vacation. He's constantly proclaiming his errs and his heresies. Out with the word of God and up with candles, up with beads and out with the word of God's scripture and on and on and on it goes. And finally, he was preaching it and he was castigating his fellow clergymen and he said, you need to stand up in your congregations and boldly proclaim the truth of God's word. All of that to say, the gift of prophecy, foretelling, preaching is alive and well and in good standing in the church today. And again, I use the example. I compared John MacArthur to our good friend, Wayne Grudem and I have both of their commentaries. Their theological textbooks, I said, on my shelf. Go to both of them a lot. Now, Wayne, he stands up in front of hundreds of people. He may stand up in a pulpit on occasion and teach and preach, but he would be the first to tell you he does not have the gift of preaching. He doesn't have the gift of proclaiming. He doesn't sense God's best pleasure in that role. He's more of a teacher. MacArthur, quite frankly, is both. He's a preacher and a teacher. And by the way, Paul describes himself in the book of Acts. He says, for God granted me to be a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. He had all the gifts together, but usually you don't get preaching and teaching thrown together necessarily in the same individual.

Now, the second gift that's listed there in the time we have, which I cannot believe is gone. I'm so sorry. It's gone. The second gift that's listed there after prophecy and before teaching is serves, whoever serves. What kind of a gift is that? And then there's a gift that follows it



called exhortation. And then there's a gift in there that says, gives. And it says, whoever gives should give liberally. Well, shouldn't we all give? And what does he really mean by that? And man, if God allows me to teach this next week, and if you're all kind enough to come back, I'll jump into this and try to explain it. Thank you for your patience though and allowing me to go a couple of minutes over. I didn't realize it had gotten that far.

And, but the one thing you say, well, what did we leave with today? One thing again, every one of you has a gift that I need to be blessed by. Everybody in the body of Christ has a unique gift that no one else has. Are you using it? If you wanna know the name, the name is you. And it needs to be used to the glory of God. And hopefully God allow me to unpack more of this in our time next week.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for this time in your word, time which flees by so rapidly. And maybe that's the most important teaching point of all, Lord. Our time is in Your hands, but our time is rapidly fleeing by. We may think we have many more years to serve You and to minister, to get it right, but that's not necessarily the case. Your word is very clear that we are to number our days. We're to redeem the time and we're to take, make the most of any and every opportunity You give us to live for Your glory. So Father, whether it's over a pulpit, whether it's over a cup of coffee, whether it's putting your arm around another brother and sister who is hurting, or whether it's just being alone, getting on your knees and exercising an extra special giftedness of prayer, I pray that speaker and listeners alike would be encouraged even by this brief look into this passage to use our gifts for Your glory to the edification of Your church. We ask it again in the matchless name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen and amen.

