

Romans: Verse-By-Verse

Romans 12:6-7 (A)

Study Notes:

What is the only thing that truly unifies them as believers? **It is Christ.** It cannot be culture, education, class hierarchy, language, nor occupation.

As one body, each member belongs to the rest. That's what Paul says at the end of verse 5: Each person in Christ belongs to the rest.

1. Each is dependent upon the rest, for the body of Christ to be healthy. 2. Each is enhanced, to the degree that the rest provide what God has gifted them to do.

Paul will point out seven gifts that were illustrative of the assertions he has just made. He's going to show how these gifts make the local church both healthy and interactive.

Let's read that list, beginning with verse 6:

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Two Measurements Of Spiritual Life:

1. The first is the gospel: The gospel message should be the first yardstick by which we measure our thoughts, our motivations, and our behavior.

2. The second measurement is the degree to which we are contributing God's gifts to the body of Christ.

Paul is drawing a parallel between the human body and the Christian community. He's showing us a healthy and interactive local church. He's told us, "*Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function.*"

It's interesting how this has been translated to modern medicine. When a physician tests our liver or pancreas, what's being measured is function.

Each member of the universal and local body of Christ is said to have a function. As with our physical body, all parts are necessary, regardless of their function.

Not all parts of the body of Christ get the same acclaim. Visibility or acclaim is not the measure Paul is considering: He is pointing to "functionality".

- **We Have Different Gifts, According To Grace:**

V.6: We have "different gifts, according to the grace given us."

The gifts that each of us has for building up the body of Christ, came through God's grace. They weren't deserved; they weren't earned; they didn't come on the basis of human achievement.

Paul divides this list into two broad categories: John Stott suggests we can call them the "Speaking gifts": prophesying, teaching and encouraging, and the "Service gifts": serving, contributing, leading and showing mercy.

1. Prophesying:

The simplest way to define prophesying is, "speaking by divine inspiration".

In both the Old and New Testaments we have numerous examples of those who spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is the reason that Ephesians 2:20 notes that apostles and prophets are the foundation on which the institutional church is built.

In the Bible, prophesying is divided into two activities: A. "Foretelling": Speaking of things which are yet to happen. B. "Forthtelling": Speaking of things which already have happened.

(A) Foretelling: See, Acts 2:29-38

Acts 2: 29-31:

"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.

Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

Peter says David was a prophet. Aren't we more likely to call him "King David"? Peter is the only New Testament writer to call David a prophet. And yet he does so, because he's talking about how David **foretold** the coming of the Messiah.

David's own description of these moments of inspiration: 2 Samuel 23:2 - "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue."

In the passage Peter chose, David is foretelling the Messiah's death, resurrection, and ascension. That's is one level of prophesying.

(B.) Forthtelling:

In Acts 2, as Peter goes on, he becomes the one used to **"forthtell"**, under the Spirit's inspiration:

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Peter is using the classic formula, “This is that”.

David foretold Christ's suffering and glorification. Peter is forthtelling that the events taking place on the Day of Pentecost are the manifestations of David's prophecies.

Was prophecy a common part of the Early Church? Absolutely! The Book of Acts is replete with examples of those who both predicted what God would do ... and explained what God was doing. Both were common gifts in action in the Early Church.

- **The Distinction Between The Gift Of Prophecy And The Role Of A Prophet.**

Speaking under the Spirit's inspiration does not automatically make one a prophet.

Ephesians 2:19-20 again: “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”

Here, the reference to the prophets points to the biblical prophets, including those New Testament authors who were prophets as well as apostles. Both Paul and John fit this category.

Prophecy, however, is not synonymous with being a prophet. Paul's advice to the Corinthians about messages spoken in church services that were either foretelling or forthtelling:

“Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophecy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.” -- 1Corinthians 14:29-31

The messages given by those prophesying during the Early Church were to be “weighed and tested”. We have no such instructions for the words of the Biblical Prophets. Their words did not undergo this kind of scrutiny. As such prophesying alone does not reach the level of the Biblical Prophets.

Charles Hodge: “The inspiration of the apostles was abiding while the inspiration of the prophets was occasional and transient”.

I want to point out that Paul gives a third indication about this gift. At the end of verse 6 he says, “Let him use it in proportion to his faith”.

This seems to indicate that prophesying, whether foretelling or forthtelling, has its limits. There is a definite article before the word “faith” in that sentence. In other word, it’s not just “faith”, but Paul means “The Faith”.

Two Possibilities: 1. Paul is saying there is an interaction between the level of one’s faith and the use of the gift. 2. Paul is saying that whatever is spoken must not contradict The Faith – God’s revealed Word.

(We are skipping the gift of serving for now, as we keep the “speaking gifts” together.)

2. Teaching:

“If it is ... if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage...”

Prophesying, teaching, and encouraging all have similar characteristics. John Stott points out that the ministry of the Word of God and “serving” both are described by the word “diakonia” – from which we derive our English word, “deacon”.

Prophesying is a speaking/serving gift. It builds up the body of Christ – whether giving insight into what God is going to do or informing us

about what God is doing.

There are a lot of definitions for the gift of teaching. One person describes it as, “The analysis and proclamation of the Word of God, clearly communicating the doctrines of the faith and the truths of the Bible”.

This gift appears in all three lists of charismata in Romans 12:6–8, 1 Corinthians 12:28, and Ephesians 4:1–12.

Teaching: An Ability or a Gift?

The spiritual gift of teaching is not necessarily identical to the ability to teach. Some people had a natural ability to teach, but is that a spiritual gift as Paul describes it here?

The teaching Paul refers to is a supernatural, God-given ability to perform a ministry for the building up of the body of Christ.

Do people with a natural ability to teach produce the same kind of spiritual growth in others as those who have received the gift of teaching?

Paul's does not include “preaching” in his list. Does Paul believe the two activities are synonymous?

Ephesians 4:11-12 -- Paul gives us a list of what we call the “fivefold” ministries:

“Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.”

The original Greek wording makes it clear that apostles, prophets, and evangelists all represent distinct roles. However, “pastors and teachers” may denote one or two roles.

The Greek includes a definite article before “the apostles”, “the prophets”, and “the evangelists”. However, there is no definite article before “pastors and teachers”.

It seems to be implied that pastors are automatically expected to be teachers. 2 Timothy 2:24: Requirements for pastoring a flock -- “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.”

The question that arises from all of this is, “While pastors must be teachers, do all teachers have to be pastors?”

Next time, we will continue with Paul’s list of spiritual gifts.